THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN POST-WAR EDUCATIONAL REFORM

IN FRANCE, 1947-1975.

VOLUME I

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This thesis has been composed entirely by the author on the basis of his own research and fieldwork.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

This thesis examines the transformation of the elementary school, the basic unit of the old primary system of mass education, into its present function as the first stage in a horizontally structured system of education. This change was proposed by the Langevin/Wallon Plan of 1947, in conjunction with the reform of the pedagogy of the school according to the principles of l'éducation nouvelle. During the next twenty years, however, the reform of the French system did not take place as a global planned process, but focussed above all on the first cycle of secondary school, a focus shared by the primary teachers' unions, keen to secure a place in emerging secondary structures.

During this process, the elementary school was affected by unprecedented problems of teacher recruitment and training arising from population growth and urbanisation, problems intensified by the "flight" of many trained teachers to the new secondary schools. These quantitative problems were accompanied by increasing pressure on the curriculum of the elementary schools as increased access to secondary schools illustrated the disparity between official expectations and actual attainments in the elementary schools.

The thesis traces the main effects of these developments on the schools. The first was the dissolution of the socially homogeneous and politically influential teaching profession of the old primary school through changes in recruitment which brought into teaching an increasing proportion of women and then often as a second choice of profession. The second effect was on the

curriculum as the increasing criticisms from secondary schools brought an increasing retrenchment in official thinking dominated by stress on the basic skills at the expense of the wide curricular horizons which the elementary had inherited from the old primary school - at least in theory and official texts.

This retrenchment was subject to qualifications from the outset, however, in that the Ministry simultaneously showed interest in the Vanves innovation which was to form the basis of the reformed school regime, while there was increasing evidence from educational researchers and from the medical profession that the regime of the existing school was ill-adapted and counter-productive. In addition, the extent of grade-repeating in the elementary school called into question the whole strategy of democratisation of the system.

These various strands of development, given greater impetus by the events of May, 1968, culminated in the rénovation pédagogique of 1969 onwards. This was intended as a reform of content, methods and organisation of the elementary school within a context of radically altered relationships within the system, breaking with the hierarchical and bureacratic modes of the past. The reform, however, inherited from the varied background of its promoters widely differing educational and political values which led to increasing tensions as the reform progressed. The thesis concludes by examining these tensions as they crystallised around the Haby reforms of 1975 onwards.

PREFACE

The topic of this thesis was prompted by the absence in the literature of comparative education of works devoted to the place of the elementary or primary school in the process of post-war educational reform. There are several valuable works on the French education system as a whole, notably by W.D. Halls,(1976), Culture,Education and Politics in France, Pergamon,Oxford, and W.R. Fraser, (1971), Reforms and Restraints in Modern French Education, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, but these quite properly devote rather greater attention to the reforms in secondary and higher education which have dominated French educational politics since the war. In many respects, the above reforms reflect one side of the great post-war blueprint for French education, the Langevin/ Wallon Plan, the creation of a unified system of secondary education. This thesis sets out to examine other facets of the Plan, the transformation of the role of the elementary schools within the perspectives of general reform and also the endorsement of the principles of l'éducation nouvelle alongside that of l'école unique.

There is an abundance of literature published in France on the subject of the elementary school. A.Prost, in his Histoire de L'Enseignement en France, 1800-1967, Armand Colin, Paris, 1968, devotes a chapter to the dissolution of the primary system, but otherwise the majority of works, of which the most notable are those of Louis Legrand, are concerned with advancing a particular viewpoint on the major questions of elementary school pedagogy rather than providing a synthesis of the post-war experience of

the elementary school within the context of post-war reform as a whole. Similarly, while there are several works on educational theory in France, notably those of Georges Snyders and Guy Avanzini, whose Immobilisme et Novation dans L'Education Scolaire, Privat, Toulouse, 1975, offers unsurpassed erudition and insight, these works are not concerned with the evolution of official policy as such in the post-war period. The aim of the present work is to draw together the various elements in the development of the elementary school within the French system, taking as its starting point the place of the school in the traditional system and the deliberations which lay behind the final recommendations of the Langevin/Wallon Plan and tracing the evolution of policy and practice up to the time of the Haby reform. The thesis is the result of documentary study, visits to schools and other educational institutions and discussion with officials, teachers, pupils and parents during a series of visits to France between 1976 and 1980.

Some indication of the boundaries of the study are necessary at this point. The dates specified in the title are essentially indicative. The earlier date marks the publication of the Langevin/Wallon Plan, but the Plan was the product of a long series of deliberations, while the elementary school of the same period was the product of a long evolution and still governed by a body of legislation dating back to the Third Republic. At the other end of the study, the Haby reforms began in 1975 and while this is taken as the end point of the work, reactions to the reform reverberated on for the following two or three years.

In addition, the concluding section of the thesis refers forward from this date to illustrate the future development of trends embodied in the reform.

The study is also confined to the elementary school as such, excluding the upper stages of the old primary system such as the cours complémentaires and the cours fin d'études except where these have a bearing on the elementary school. For the most part these elements are relegated to the margins of the study as they were to the margins of post-war educational development, both being essentially obsolescent from their creation, given the trend of thinking on educational reform, particularly the desire for universal secondary education since the 1930's.

The delineation of the elementary school for the purposes of the study also introduces a point concerning nomenclature. French usage differs somewhat from English in the matter of the connotations attaching to "élémentaire" and "primaire", the literal translations of "elementary" and "primary" generally meaning the opposite of what they mean in English. In France, the system of mass education to age 13 or 14 was known as l'école primaire, its basic classes as l'école primaire élémentaire. With the movement towards a horizontally structured system, the first stage is now most commonly labelled l'école élémentaire. There appears to be no particular reason for this difference in usage; the junior classes attached to the lycées were often referred to as classes primaires while Condorcet's scheme at the time of the Revolution was criticised for using this term and thus implying the prospect

of access to the _secondaire_ for the mass of the population. Even today, the position is not entirely clear; if the official title of the school is _école élémentaire_ and this title is used in the diagrams of the system put out by official agencies, all the Paris schools visited by the author retain the nomenclature _primaire_. The term _primaire_ also crops up in a number of modern book titles, while the _Syndicat National des Instituteurs_ also tends to retain this nomenclature, for reasons which reflect much of the union's history.

Faced with these variations, the author has chosen to use the term "primary" to denote the old system of mass education, the term "elementary" to denote the first stage, either within the the primary school or in the context of the reformed system. The term primary does crop up in its double usage at various points in the text; such usage deliberately reflects either the above distinction or the usage of the group or individual under discussion.

On wider questions of usage, French terms in the text have been underlined, except names of places and persons. This procedure has been followed throughout with one exception, that of the bibliography, in which book titles have not been underlined,in order to avoid excess. In consequence, French and English language works are listed separately.

Where little is lost in translation, terms and titles have been translated, for example in references to the various branches of administration. Others, for example, _école normale_ and _activités d'éveil_ have been left in the original. Inspectors are

variously treated according to status. The vast majority of references to inspectors concern Inspecteurs D'Enseignement Primaire, or Inspecteurs Départementaux de L'Education Nationale as they were known between 1969 and 1976, and the word "inspector" in the text refers to one of these officials. On their much rarer appearances Inspecteurs Généraux and Inspecteurs D'Académie retain their full titles.

These last examples bring up the final point concerning the use of capitals in the titles of books, officials and organisations. French and English usage being different in this respect, the author has adopted the practice of applying English usage to French titles in the interests of consistency since capitals throughout a title are not altogether unknown in French material but the French practice is completely unknown in English. Capitals have not been used in the names of French educational institutions and qualifications, but have been retained for specific rank of individuals, including the extension into English references of the habitual capital bestowed in French on the Minister. Similarly, capitals have been retained for references to Instructions Officielles whether these references be in French or English. Such reflection of French usage conveys in the view of the author something of the spirit as well as the letter of French educational terminology.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN THE DEVELOPING STRUCTURES OF THE SYSTEM

Before examining the impact of post-war reforms and other pressures on the organisation and pedagogy of the elementary school, it is necessary to provide a brief sketch of the distinctive place occupied by the school within the French system of education. The elementary school was originally part of the primary school system of popular education, from which both its pedagogy and its teaching body derived a particular set of values. The framework within which these values were expressed remained something of a side issue in later reforms in which the elementary classes were often left to one side, but nonetheless the progress of reform further up the structure of the system led to a situation in which the elementary school was transformed in relation to other parts of the system, notably by the opening of access to the secondary schools. Since it was not tackled as a reform question in itself for over twenty years after the war, the elementary school in many respects preserved much of its character derived from the obsolescent primary system of which it had formed a part, even after its prime role had been changed in effect to preparation for secondary education. That the values of the elementary school should be left in juxtaposition to the new demands of the evolving system, even in official policy which in the post-war period showed occasional ambivalence on this question, was itself a product of the past and in particular the interaction of the various components of the primary and secondary systems of education in France.

The primary school had originally been created as an entity

quite separate from the pre-existing secondary schools which had embodied the essence of the system created by Napoleon, serving a different clientele for different ends. During the 60 years of its history prior to and including the 1939-1945 war, the primary school came to occupy an ambiguous position in relationship to the older and more prestigious branch of the system, a position marked by a corresponding ambivalence on the part of those who administered and staffed the primary schools. In the tensions which thus developed, one may identify major sources of the problems of integrating the elementary school into the post-war reform process.

In the first place, as already stated, the primary school was a system separate from the secondary schools. At the outset of the 1914-1919 war, about one elementary school pupil in 100 progressed to the upper levels of the secondary school. In addition to being a separate system, however, the primary school became a system which competed with the secondary schools in its provision of more advanced courses than the basic education which had been prescribed by its founders in the early years of the Third Republic. This was a process in which administration and teachers made common cause; the Direction du Premier Degré within the Ministry of Public Instruction pursued territorial concerns which matched those of the teachers' union, the expansion and development of the upper levels of the system. This organisation of the Ministry survived until 1960, by which time the distinctive system which it served had been largely broken up. Long before

this, however, this unity of purpose had served to create a system in which the participants vested much pride, a system which was worth defending against the countervailing tendencies of post-war reform.

This separate and competitive development was only one side of the question, being in itself responsible for the creation of contrary tendencies. As the system developed and expanded its aspirations, those within primary education looked for opportunities to break out of the limited circle of opportunities offered by "primary" qualifications, a possibility enhanced as the levels of primary qualifications approached those of the secondary schools and as the development of the primary system tended towards duplication of the offerings of the latter. This latter tendency was accelerated by the trend of reform proposals between the wars, with their stress on the creation of a unified system of education under the label of "l'école unique".

The effects of these twin tendencies had already placed the elementary classes of the primary schools in an ambiguous position in that the relationships between primary and secondary education were identified most pressingly as a problem in the upper stages, in the interaction between the latter and the upper levels of the former. The purpose of this introduction is to trace the broad lines of these developments as a background to the post-war reform experience, over which it cast a considerable shadow.

The primary school was the product of a series of develop-

ments during the nineteenth century and was given a distinctive and long-lived ethos by the founders of the Third Republic. The basic infrastructure of the system was established as early as 1833, when the Guizot Law prescribed the establishment of a school in every commune and a teacher training college in every department, although for men only, this latter measure extending a development dating from 1810, when the first école normale was established in Strasbourg. Although the Law did not require compulsory attendance, it still provided the framework for future development by permitting the establishment of an upper primary school, école primaire supérieure, where such demand existed.

The establishment of the internal structure of the elementary/primary school also predated the introduction of compulsory education in almost all of its details. Gréard, Director of the Paris schools under the Second Empire, introduced a tripartite division into the cours élémentaire, or elementary course, for children aged 7 to 9, the middle course, cours moyen for 9 to 11 year old pupils and the upper course, cours supérieur for ages 11 to 13. This pattern was eventually supplemented by the creation in 1892 of the cours préparatoire, or preparatory course, for children of 6 years. This pattern remains the basis of the modern organisation of the elementary school, although the cours supérieur, first truncated by the spread of post-elementary education and then rendered obsolete after the 1939-45 war, has disappeared. The final class of the elementary school, the cours moyen, still bears witness in its title to the upper

stages of primary education which have now also disappeared. Gréard also established another longstanding feature of the school system, its curriculum organised on a concentric basis; designed to combat the problem of irregular attendance by the strategy of leaving "an ever deeper trace" on the mind of the pupil,[1] concentric programmes survived until 1923, but even after their disappearance still left a considerable legacy to French elementary education in that the practice of grade-repeating with which the concentric programmes were associated remained a major problem of the system almost to the present time. Finally, the training system reached its modern form with the establishment of training colleges for women in 1879.

The founders of the Third Republic consummated these developments by making education free and compulsory. The programme of legislation of the 1880's also established the primary school at the centre of the republican ethos, as a tool of modernisation and national unity, imbued with a distinctive spirit derived from its neutrality in religious matters. The primary school was rigorously lay both in its staff and its curriculum, in which religious education was replaced by moral and civic education, except in the recovered provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, to which the lay laws were not extended after their recovery. The first Official Instructions of 1887 and Jules Ferry's celebrated letter to the primary teachers made it clear that the intention was not anti-religious - Devoirs envers Dieu appears in the programmes for moral education - but this avowedly secular policy was to become a source of future conflict.

The founders of the system of mass education thus endowed the teaching body with a distinctive sense of mission, embodied in their nomenclature. Ida Berger has pointed out that the French primary teachers were and are unique in this respect, in that their nomenclature, alone among European teachers, does not refer primarily to their teaching function; the prime meaning of instituteur or institutrice is founder or foundress, i.e. of the French Republic.[2] Whether the question was seen in quite such terms by either legislators or teachers at the time may be open to question, but this was certainly how the teachers saw themselves and were seen by others in later years. The Third Republic gave teachers a status previously lacking, making the teacher less of a subordinate to the curé than a counterweight or a rival. After the Dreyfus affair, the Republican idealism and religious neutrality of the teaching profession increasingly gave way to a vigorous and sometimes virulent anti-clericalism which added another dimension to the lay character of the school and which still coloured teacher attitudes to educational matters well into the period studied in the body of this thesis.

This primary school established in the 1880's, originally as a system of basic education for the mass of the population, rapidly extended its ambitions beyond the limited horizons of its origins; in fact, it may be claimed that the primary school had outgrown its original ambitions even before these original aims had been entirely fulfilled. Under the Third Republic, for almost all of its existence, school attendance seems to have been

regarded as a moral rather than a legal requirement and the sanctions provided by law were rarely applied. Enforcing attendance was a particularly difficult matter in rural areas in which reliance on child labour at the busiest times of the year took precedence over school attendance. (There is some evidence that teachers in rural areas found the demands of their acres conflicting with the demands of the teaching job.)[3] Eventually the introduction of family allowances provided an effective sanction against non-attendance, but by the time that this happened, social, economic and technological change had brought some change of attitudes anyway. By 1936, the school attendance rate reached 92%, but it was still necessary for the Langevin/Wallon Commission to consider proposals for enforcing attendance and to think in terms of a flexible organisation of the school year to take account of periods of intense agricultural activity.[4]

If the 1930's saw the attainment of the aim of ensuring universal primary education, the decade also saw the prolongations of the primary school come to rival and to demand access to the qualifications of the secondary sector. The trend of rising aspirations of the primary school system may be traced through the expansion of the system of upper primary schools, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The numbers of such schools increased from 296 in 1890 to 579 in 1937, during which time the function of such schools was completely transformed.[5] Their original purpose had been to train the cadres moyens of the French nation, in similar fashion to the task of the German realschulen. They

offered educational provision without fees, in contrast to the lycées before the 1930's. Their original course had been a three year course within very flexible age limits of 12 to 18, offering a variety of sections after a one year common course. These sections were general, technical, industrial and commercial, leading either to the brevet élémentaire or the concours d'entrée aux écoles normales. As the network of schools developed, however, there was increasing concentration on the general sections, technical education being left to its own separate branch of the system, established in 1892. Extension of the course, leading to the brevet supérieur, (also the basic teaching qualification), raised ambitions of eventual access to the baccalaureate and in practice the upper primary schools came to duplicate the modern sections of the lycées. The teaching body of the upper primary was separate from the primary teaching force as a whole, being drawn from the faculties or from the école normale supérieure, the latter institution representing the pinnacle of the primary school system and the summation of its own distinctive career ladder.

Not all primary schools, however, could lead on to an upper primary school. Some village schools provided a cours complémentaire, a two year course taught by instituteurs without the need for further qualifications and offering the unusual advantage of absence from any set programme, to allow the teachers to relate the education provided to the economic needs of the area. The main significance of the cours complémentaire belongs to a later part

of this chapter and indeed to the topic of the thesis as a whole, in the role which it played in the resolution of the internal tensions created by the development of the primary schools.

The key institution of the original system was the *école normale*, not so much because of its actual function but because it embodied the ideology central to the public schools of the Third Republic. In terms of its functions, it seems to have been a perennial anomaly within the system, duplicating first the upper primary schools, expansion of which left the *école normale* with little of its original rationale since it prepared the same academic qualification, and then after the 1940-1944 period the functions of the *lycées*. In consequence, the institutions had gone through several forms of organisation even before the second World War. The *écoles normales* offered a three year course to students, of 15 years upwards, who boarded in the establishment, receiving free tuition and lodgings in return for an engagement to serve for ten years after completing training, on pain of reimbursement of costs of training. Although this regime offered considerable advantages compared to the secondary schools, the *écoles normales* often being labelled the "*lycées* of the poor", students still incurred a proportion of the costs which was sufficiently heavy to demand considerable sacrifices from families seeking social promotion for a son or daughter. The *école normale* also offered its ablest students a further year of study permitting entry to the *école normale supérieure*.

For the early years of the state system, this aspect of the question has to be set against Ozouf's evidence that to become a primary teacher was often a means of escaping from other difficult circumstances of rural or artisanal life for which the teacher might be ill-equipped. [6] In the inter-war period, however, despite current dissatisfaction with its function, the école normale acquired considerable status, in part reflecting the improving status of the teaching body as recruitment was sufficient to meet staffing needs and there was less reliance on supply teachers. The nature of the institutions, staffed by a professorate also drawn from the primary schools by way of the two écoles normales supérieures, reinforced the homogeneity offered by the students' shared background to develop a formidable esprit de corps which exemplified the outlook of the Third Republic. In the "petite République normalienne", as it was sometimes labelled even after the war when its original setting and function had disappeared, the students were educated en vase clos, "seminarists without surplices, but seminarists nonetheless". [7] To their supporters and detractors alike, the establishments were seen as concerned with ontology as much as training, a consensus which greatly influenced the question of reform from the time of Vichy onwards and which made the école normale a kind of republican totem in educational questions, however much its function fell behind the trend of teacher aspirations for higher qualifications or access to faculties.

The development of the écoles normales was affected by the same trend of rising aspirations as affected the primary school system as a whole. The institutions steadily evolved towards provision of an essentially secondary curriculum. This process was confirmed by the Lapie reforms in 1920, which among other things introduced sociology into the curriculum for trainee teachers, although the Ministry did still refer to the école normale as une école élémentaire de pédagogie. [8] (The nomenclature of the subject may be somewhat misleading here, as the sociology, introduced by Lapie as a means of reinforcing prevailing social values, [9] has been characterised as essentially "a utilitarian meditation on Republican values"). [10] In line with the general trend, however, the level of the basic teaching qualification was raised in 1932 from that of the brevet élémentaire to that of the brevet supérieur, but the aspirations of the teachers had already surpassed this and their union had begun to press, like the staff and clientele of the upper primary, for access to the baccalaureate.

Having noted the prolongations of the primary system, it is worth referring also to the fact that the secondary system rivalled the primary in one important aspect of its provision, which was to create as many anomalies as the upwards spread of primary ambitions. The primary classes of the lycées, also known as the petites classes, provided an elementary, or in English terms, primary education leading to the secondary schools. The resulting duplication of provision between the two systems was the first of its kind to be tackled in official policy. The programmes of the lycée primaries

and the elementary stage of the primary school were unified, at least in official texts, from 1926 onwards; the Official Instructions of 1923 for the primary school had already intimated an intention to bring the two together. The primary classes of the lycées were also placed under the control of the Primary Directorate and the concours for the professorate suppressed. This was much more difficult in practice, however, and Jean Zay, Minister of National Education during the Popular Front, was convinced by the opposition of the Secondary Directorate that the only solution was the abolition of these classes. They were eventually suppressed in law in 1945, but their continuing survival was assured by the demographic crisis of the 1950's and a slowly diminishing number survived to the end of the 1960's.

To return to the development of the upper stages and further ambitions of the primary schools, the consummation of the developments outlined above represented the apogee of the primary school system and the teachers who served it. The latter had gained greatly in status and esteem by the inter-war period, in part as a product of the attainment of a unified and fully qualified profession, but also largely due to the influence of their union, the Syndicat National des Instituteurs, which took over from the variety of professional associations which had previously developed, usually in the form of amicales. After gaining recognition from Cartel des Gauches in 1924, the union went on to establish itself as a virtual partner in the administration of the system through its domination of teacher representation in the departmental

consultative committees for primary education, to the extent that it came close to exercising something like autonomy in the matters of nominations and promotions. According to Philip Williams, SNI came to represent a model of successful union organisation for others to follow. [11] Within the education system, they represented a powerful interest group which no Minister could ignore and, in the view of Prost, which no Minister would wish to tackle. [12] SNI's monopoly of union activity in the primary schools was broken by the establishment of the Syndicat Général de L'Education Nationale in 1937; affiliated to first CFTC then CFTD, SGEN, which as its name implies does not draw its membership exclusively from the elementary or primary schools, has remained the minor union and has acquired only a small minority of seats on the consultative organs of the system. For its part, SNI has always treated SGEN with a silent disdain - the pages of the post-war L'Ecole Libératrice scarcely betray the existence of a rival union and in fact SGEN found it sufficiently noteworthy to be attacked in the pages of SNI's journal during 1975 to treat it as a mark that SGEN had finally arrived. [13]

The establishment of SNI was accompanied by a growing air of self-confidence in the teaching body as a whole and the interwar period marked the high point of the teachers' status in the rural community. The primary teacher tended always to suffer from a certain degree of social and professional isolation - ironically mirroring his great rival the curé in this respect. This isolation was inherent in the job, especially in the smallest communes, where

the teacher was expected not only to be the educational, social and moral guide of the community, but also to stand apart from the local political tensions; editions of the teachers' guide, the Code Soleil, published during the 1970's, still stress that the teacher must not be drawn into local cliques. [14] Relationships with elected officials were also a delicate area. Although the teacher was not the hierarchical subordinate of the mayor and the latter had no right of entry to school premises, the teacher was expected to treat the local dignitaries with respect - and they were responsible for the upkeep of the school and the quality of the teacher's lodgings, which went with the post.

By the 1930's, however, primary teachers had become established figures in the rural communities and some 20,000 of their number had become secrétaires de mairies. In this capacity the teacher often represented the mediator between the peasant society and the demands of a bureacratic state and the majority of rural teachers were strongly rooted in this environment for which the lay school had been created. By contrast, the position of urban teachers seems always to have been less distinctive and they tended to merge into the mass of white collar workers in the towns as "un tiers-état rapé, serré entre l'ouvrier et le bourgeois". [15] Post-war population shifts were to bring the vast majority of teachers into the latter situation.

In material terms, the period also represented something of a golden age - at least in the eyes of post-war teachers. The achievement of a fully trained teaching body in the inter-war period

was also accompanied by some improvement in the remuneration offered to primary teachers, although they suffered like other public servants from the various fiscal emergencies of the 1930's. In national political terms, however, the teachers definitely had their greatest influence during the 1930's. The political outlook of the union had been shaped by the huge loss of life between 1914 and 1919. If the instituteurs' success in establishing primary education, the Republic and national unity is sometimes measured in terms of the response to mobilisation in 1914, [16] their subsequent political outlook was dominated by a pacifism which, like their anti-clericalism, occasionally ran to extremes, and which contributed to a diametrically opposed assessment of their achievement in 1940. In the 1920's, SNI was one of the moving forces in European attempts to remove excesses of chauvinism from history textbooks, in an attempt to eradicate the nationalistic attitudes which had contributed to the outbreak of the 1914-1919 war. They were prominent in the opposition to Poincaré in 1924 and carried their intense pacifism into their support for the Popular Front, of which they were among the prime movers. They remained pacifist in outlook, however, right up to the outbreak of war and as a consequence were isolated after the collapse of the Popular Front. Their political role was interpreted unfavourably by the Vichy regime, with unfortunate consequences for both the union and the homogeneity of its system. Before considering Vichy policy, however, it is important to identify the other tensions which had by this time come to threaten the homogeneity of the primary school system.

The development of the primary school up to and during the 1930's posed several important questions for the future. In the first place, the stress on the development of the upper levels of the system tended to deflect attention away from the basic unit of the system, the école primaire élémentaire, in a manner which foreshadowed the emphases of union thinking during the sequence of post-war reforms. As the ambitions of the upper stages increased, so the status of the elementary classes and their qualification, the CEPE, diminished. This examination dated back to 1880 and could be taken from the age of 12 onwards, thus serving a variety of functions not dissimilar to those of the old Scottish qualifying examination, as an examination for entry to the upper primary school or as a terminal qualification. For half a century, the CEPE dominated the aims of the primary schools, attaining some prestige as the basic qualification of mass education and often being proudly displayed, framed, in rural households. As the upper primary schools developed, however, the prestige of this humble qualification diminished, a process hastened by the introduction in 1932 of an examination for entry to secondary education, in which the fees were abolished at the same time. Roger Thabault has chronicled the continued interest in the CEPE in his native village up to the 1930's.[17] These changes in values were reflected in other ways, for example in the increasing tendency for men to gravitate towards the upper stages, thus anticipating the feminisation of the staff of the elementary classes which was to become a major feature of the post-war period.

In addition, the possibility of entry to the secondary schools created further sources of tension. The age for the entrée en sixième examination was 10-11, as opposed to 11-12 for the CEPE in its functions as a transfer examination. This anomaly, compounded somewhat by the transfer of the upper primary schools to the secondary system, which turned them into essentially secondary schools conforming to the lycée pattern, was at least easily resolved both by Vichy and the post-war Ministry, with the inception of a single transfer examination.

More important, however, than the organisational anomaly, was that the two examinations exemplified different curricular values. The entrée en sixième was essentially an examination of basic skills in language and arithmetic, mirroring the views of the secondary professorate, excluding the wider aspirations of the elementary curriculum as defined in 1887 and 1923. The secondary view was most succinctly expressed by the Radical philosopher, Alain, who defined the task of the Primary Director as that of teaching all French children to learn to read.[18] Nor was this view confined to the secondary system but was frequently expressed by instituteurs teaching in the upper stages of the primary system, while one of the contributors to the 1935 edition of the Encyclopédie Française asserted that the instituteur was generally thought to have exceeded his task when he went beyond the three R's.[19] By contrast, the CEPE tested the full range of the curriculum, including for example the patriotic songs which were prescribed by the Official Instructions. These wider aspirations, however, appear to have given rise to an increasingly unprofitable encyclopaedism in the attempt to provide every child with the essential knowledge for

a lifetime in accordance with the aims of the founders of mass education. This was to reflect a central tension in the question of elementary curriculum throughout the post-war period.

As well as raising questions about the role of the elementary school, such developments also gave rise to conflicting pressures in the primary school system, which suffered from the dilemma engendered by the fact that while it could not in itself satisfy the ambitions raised by its own development, it represented a system worth striving to preserve, thus creating an ambivalence in teacher reactions which also survived into the post-war period, if somewhat sharpened in its expression by the experience of Vichy.

This problem may best be illustrated by examining the responses of the primary teachers and their Directorate to the rationalisation of structures which was the main product of the reform impetus in the pre-war years. While the principle of l'école unique enunciated after the 1914-1919 war by the Compagnons de L'Université Nouvelle had been taken up at least in rhetoric by the parties of the left, there had been little movement towards the creation of a unified system of education until the inception of the access by examination to secondary school and the freeing of tuition in 1932. Following this, the success of the upper primary schools in gaining access to the baccalaureate examination created an obvious duplication of facilities with the modern sections of the lycées and prompted Jean Zay to propose their assimilation into the secondary sector

under the new title of collèges modernes. Although legislated for by Zay and confirmed by Vichy, this did not become definitive until 1944. The response of the primary system anticipated the corporatist concerns which were to dominate opposition to post-war reform proposals. If, to judge by complaints, the instituteurs did not unduly regret the limiting of the curricular horizons of the elementary school, they were hotly opposed to any corresponding diminution of their career avenues. To replace the lost primary establishments, teachers and Directorate alike developed the cours complémentaires beyond their originally modest aims, offering courses up to age 15, in duplication of the upper primary schools lost to the secondary system. This illustrated the diffusion of attention away from the elementary schools consequent upon aspirations which were to continue to dominate the thinking of SNI after the war.

Such considerations also influenced the attitudes of the teachers towards the training institutions. To serve as an effective alternative to the secondary schools, the cours complémentaire had to offer some access to further studies and the most obvious possibility was the école normale. As already noted, the trend of teacher aspirations during the 1930's was towards the acquisition of the baccalaureate as the basic teaching qualification, which would open wider career opportunities than the brevet supérieur, valid only within the primary system and offering no access to university faculties. The institutions had already undergone several changes of regime during their history,

veering between consecutive and concurrent patterns of training. The existing pattern during the 1930's was that established by Lapie, of three years of concurrent training leading to the B.S. Jean Zay proposed in 1937 that the baccalaureate should replace the former as the basic qualification and also that such preparation should take place in the lycées, thus limiting the role of the écoles normales to subsequent professional training. Zay's proposal was not the first of its kind; the position of the institutions in relation to the growing network of upper primary schools, the paucity of which in the early years of the system had been the raison d'être of the training institutions, was a previous anomaly which Anatole de Monzie had wished to rationalise in a similar fashion. On the other hand, this caught the teaching profession in two minds; if the baccalaureate offered the wider horizons which the teachers sought, the loss of early recruitment to the école normale meant that the place of the cours complémentaire in the future development of the system would be jeopardised. The proposed Zay reform was not in fact implemented; it was left to the Vichy regime to pursue the logic of pre-war policies but in a fashion which served to establish the école normale as the totem of republican educational values.

One of the first acts of the Vichy regime was to make the baccalaureate the basic qualification for all primary teachers and to confine the training institutions to the task of professional training. While it apparently met the demands of the teaching profession in some respects, it did so out of a profound hostility

to the primary system as a whole and the écoles normales in particular. The latter were suppressed, to be replaced by instituts de formation professionelle. The regime reacted strongly to the pacifism of the instituteurs; if the founders of the lay school had seen the Prussian teacher as the architect of Sedan, those who interred the Third Republic saw the French primary teachers as the defeatist elements which had contributed most to the defeat of France in 1940. The anti-clerical view of the teachers' union was anathema to the regime as it had long been to the political right as a whole and this also prompted some of the action taken against the primary system. Along with the écoles normales, whose students were dispersed into lycées, SNI was suppressed and the écoles normales supérieures of the primary system abolished, in order to destroy the esprit primaire which was identified as the source of national disgrace.

Even in the short term, the effect of Vichy policy seems to have been a disappointment to all concerned. J-O. Grandjouan of the Durry and Langevin/Wallon Commissions submitted to the latter a paper in which he presented a less unsympathetic view of Vichy policies than the general execration heaped upon the regime after the Liberation. [20] Grandjouan argued that the principles underlying the various Vichy reforms, excepting aberrations like the programmes for girls and the introduction of religious education, were excellent but that they were either inadequate or inoperable in practice. It was certainly true that the majority of Vichy policies pursued avenues already opened by pre-war trends, even

in the case of teacher-training, but the effects of these policies tended to bear out Grandjouan's argument. In addition, the short term effects of the Vichy policy only brought to the surface the inherent tensions in the development of the primary system. The practice of sending recruits to the lycées brought few benefits from any standpoint. The groups of trainees tended to remain quite separate from their younger fellow-pupils, partly as a result of official encouragement in the establishments. [21] The failure of this attempt to break the esprit de corps of the primary students, however, was less important than the fact that the new system allowed the students to give practical expression to the rising aspirations embodied in access to the baccalaureate and provide a clear indication of the implications for the future of this development. The breaking down of the closed world of the primary system led in some lycées to as many as 80% of an intake "evading" the primary schools. [22]

The instituts de formation professionelle , 66 in number and evenly divided between establishments for men and for women, offered a three month course either followed by or preceded by a three month teaching practice under the supervision of the inspectorate, this pattern permitting three intakes of trainee teachers per session. To those who had been in favour of post-baccalaureate training before the war, this was a parody of the kind of reforming intentions represented by such as the Zay reforms. In addition the institutes suffered from staffing and material problems which confirmed Grandjouan's view of the inadequacy of the measures taken

in practice, while students were unable to absorb in the short time available an ill-conceived and overloaded curriculum. The Ministry appears to have been as disappointed as everyone else and as early as July, 1942, the Director of Primary Education, St. Joly, envisaged a return to the école normale in something like its pre-war form.[23]

This restoration in fact took place as one of the first acts of the Liberation but the restored institutions had by then lost their pre-war equilibrium through the loss of the staff who had serviced them, with the abolition of the écoles normales supérieures. Although the latter were also restored after the war, they too had lost many of their original staff, but in any case, the retention of the baccalaureate for primary teachers entailed new tasks for the écoles normales, necessitating the recruitment of secondary teachers for the preparation of a secondary examination. Early recruitment was also restored, which served to make the establishment a rather different sort of anomaly than it had been before the war. In the long term, however, the Vichy policies coloured the whole question of reform of teacher training for the next twenty years. Any attempt to reform the restored institutions, which had obvious shortcomings deriving from their double function, which wasted training capacity in duplication of the work of the modern sections of the lycées, was met with a torrent of polemics from the teachers' unions and the political left, in which the memory of the Vichy institutes was readily invoked. This served in turn other, more practical, purposes; early recruitment meant

that it was still possible for pupils from the cours complémentaires could gain entry to the écoles normales, thus ensuring a future role for these establishments, from which about half the students in training were drawn over the next fifteen years, the other half coming from the collèges modernes.

Similar comment might be made about the effects of other aspects of Vichy policy affecting the primary schools. The regime sought to encourage the use of more active methods and to restore physical education to its rightful place in the curriculum, both of which policies reflected long-standing concerns within the system. The Official Instructions of 1923 had inveighed against the neglect of the latter in schools, while the use of the former was one of the eternal verities of official educational theory. In practice, however, the regime failed to tackle the root causes of the problem, the overloaded programmes of the schools, making no reductions in other matters to match the time recommended for P.E. Critics of Vichy also argued, in the rhetoric of the Liberation, that the school curriculum was basically incompatible with the values of the Vichy regime in that for example French history could never train people to be resigned to defeat. Grandjouan went so far as to pay the schools of Vichy the back-handed compliment that they had forged the combatants of the Resistance.[24]

In other respects still, the Vichy policies tackled problems which were obvious during the Third Republic and reached solutions which were adopted, if sometimes differently labelled, by post-war

ministries. As already noted, Vichy continued Zay's policy of assimilating the upper primary schools into the secondary sector. The question of anomalies in transfer between the elementary and various succeeding stages at 11 or 12 was resolved by the adoption of a single examination, a policy taken up after the war when the entrée en sixième was re-introduced as the common transfer examination.

The educational policies pursued in the wake of the Liberation ostensibly sought to restore the system to its pre-war shape, including the elementary school and the école normale, although the baccalaureate was retained as the basic teaching qualification. The former was "restored to its former simplicity and efficacy" by the Official Instructions of 1945, [25] which confirmed the continuing validity of the 1923 texts but revised timetables and some subject content in the basic skills. Restoration to normality, however, was a difficult process, for a variety of reasons. The Vichy regime had broken the mould of the primary system and had unleashed some of the tensions inherent in its development. The obverse of the Vichy policies was the burgeoning of a widespread movement towards major educational reform in the direction of a unified system based on a horizontal articulation of stages rather than the vertical division of educational systems serving different sections of the population. These movements, deriving from clandestine planning during the Resistance and in the planning of groups in London and Algiers, finally took shape in the Langevin/ Wallon Commission established in 1944. The Plan published by the

Commission in June, 1947,was to mark the definitive statement of the future shape of the elementary school as the first stage in a reformed system, a point which was taken up by all the ministerial projects which succeeded the Plan.

If both the trend of events and the intentions of post-war reformers signalled a change in the relationships between the elementary school and the other components of the system as the old primary school began to break up, the circumstances in which the school functioned were also open to considerable change. The primary schools had suffered serious material damage during the war. 4,900 classes had been destroyed while a further 6,000 had been damaged and the absence of resources for the maintenance of those remaining had led, as one Director of Primary Education put it, to "schools tumbling into ruin throughout the country".[26] In the immediate pre-war period there had been a teacher surplus in a situation in which the birth rate had declined. This surplus was dissipated by the effects of the war, during which there had been considerable reliance on temporary staff. In the immediate post-war years, the birth rate rose dramatically as the recruitment to teacher-training establishments collapsed. In addition, the effects of Vichy policy had led to the loss of many wartime recruits to other parts of the system.

In addition, the schools had to function in a changing environment, although the full effects of this only became evident in the 1950's. Although the process of rural depopulation had begun before the war, the majority of French schools were still in the late 1940's, small rural institutions. The distribution

of schools by size is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1 FRENCH PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN 1948, BY NUMBERS OF CLASSES

1 class	45,000
2 classes	13,700
3/4 classes	7,400
5/9 classes	4,700
10+ classes	1,900
Total	72,700

Source: Interview with M. Beslais, Director of Primary Education, L'Education Nationale, 28th October, 1948, p.18.

This situation was also to change rapidly after the war, with long-term effects which are pursued in the body of the thesis.

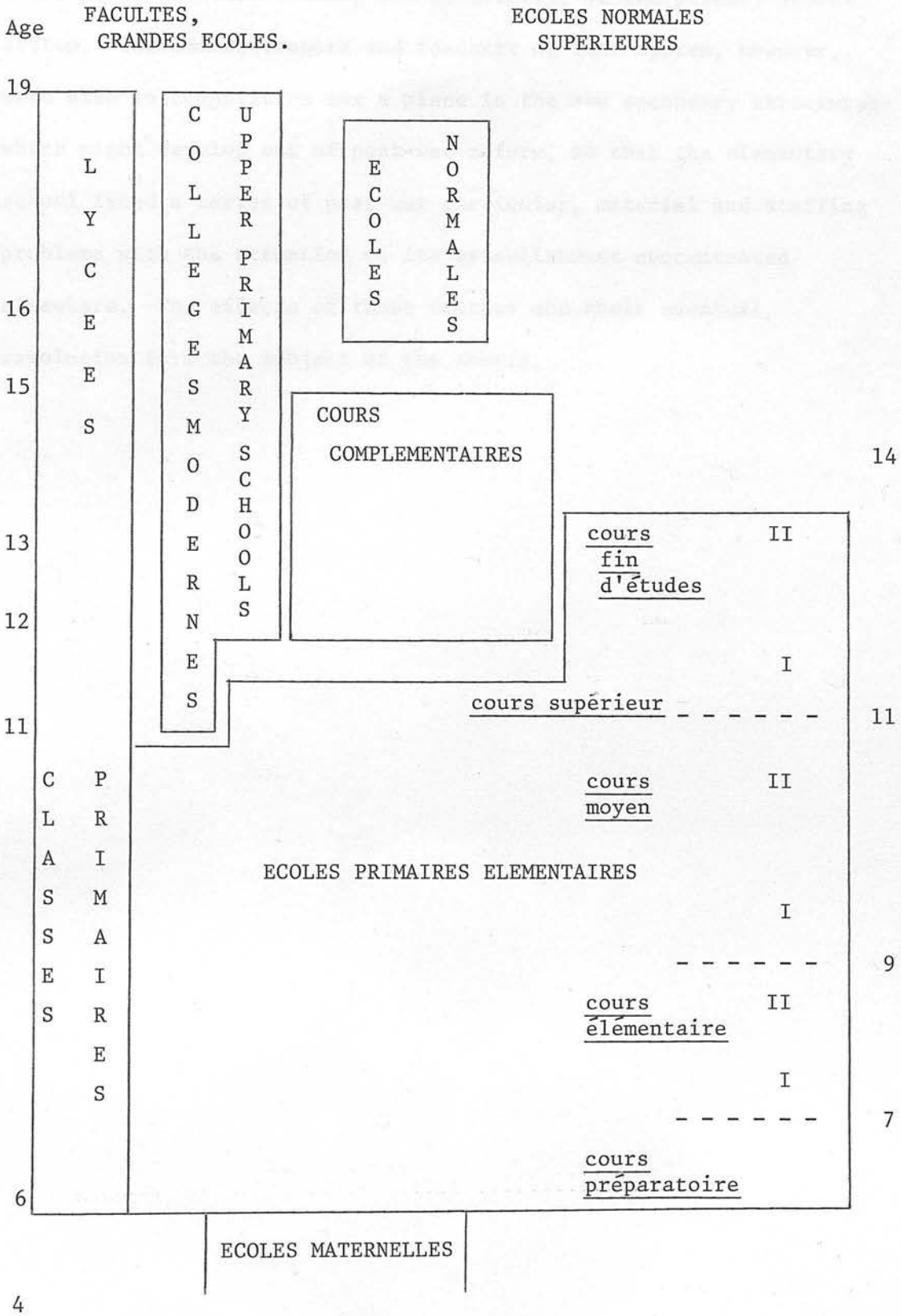
In conclusion, by 1947, the elementary school had begun to take its final shape within the post-war system of education in France, as the first stage of compulsory education, for children between the ages of 6 and 11. It still retained in part its links with the primary system in that the term école primaire élémentaire also included both the cours supérieur and a new course for 11/12-14 year olds, the cours fin d'études primaires, which led to the CEPE in its post-war form as a terminal qualification. The cours supérieur, however, had been cut down to only one year and was by 1947 obsolescent even in this truncated form, due to the rationalisation of transfer to post-

elementary education at 11 and the inception of a new course for the remainder. The course had already been suppressed in rural schools in 1945, although it remained optional in urban schools.[27] The cours complémentaires grew fairly rapidly in number from 1945 onwards, but for most rural schools, the cours fin d'études became the terminal course. (Fig. 1).

On the other hand, the beginnings of increased access to secondary and post-elementary courses at 11, marked by the restoration of the entrée en sixième examination, created curricular tensions for the elementary school. The original curriculum of the elementary school was conceived in terms of the primary system as a whole and the elementary classes had shared in the wide and generous aims of the primary curriculum. Access to secondary schools, however, brought to bear an alternative view of what should be the appropriate curriculum for the first stage, exemplified by the content of the selection examination. These tensions, whether apparent or real, defined the terms of the debate on the function of the elementary school for twenty years after the war.

Finally, the elementary school was confronted with a further source of tensions in that the attentions of reformers, Ministry and teachers tended to be focussed elsewhere during the reform process, the first cycle of secondary being the main focus of succeeding attempts to create a unified system of universal secondary education in France. While this was common to countries other than France, including England and Scotland, the characteristic

FIGURE 1 SECONDARY AND PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE IMMEDIATE POST-WAR PERIOD



This diagram is confined to those elements of the system relevant to the topic. Technical education and such components of secondary education as the preparatory classes for the Grandes Ecoles have been omitted.

was especially critical for the French elementary school. It was still part, administratively and syndically, of the primary school system. The administrators and teachers of that system, however, were also in competition for a place in the new secondary structures which might develop out of post-war reform, so that the elementary school faced a series of post-war curricular, material and staffing problems with the attention of its establishment concentrated elsewhere. The effects of these factors and their eventual resolution form the subject of the thesis.

C H A P T E R I

THE TRADITIONAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Amid the varied pattern of developments in the system and the growing need to rationalise these in a planned and coherent reform of the educational system, the elementary schools had enjoyed a long period of apparent stability within a firmly ordered administrative machinery, its work sustained by long-standing principles largely unchanged since the 1880's. The powerful pressures for structural change in the inter-war period had not been accompanied by corresponding pressure for pedagogical re-appraisal and the advocates of l'éducation nouvelle were few in number before the 1950's, the number of practitioners of progressive approaches even fewer. This apparent stability lasted well into the post-war period as the administrative structure within which the elementary stage functioned remained unchanged for the duration of the Fourth Republic, its demise coinciding with the first stages of reform leading to the creation of a unified system of education.

The stability of the curriculum of the elementary school during this period was increasingly affected by the pressures arising from the expansion of entry to secondary schools and cours complémentaires, with considerable influence on official thinking, so that there were progressive modifications in detail over the twenty years following the war. This was a somewhat hesitant process, however, and these new pressures did not supplant but rather co-existed with the body of curriculum legislation which the elementary school had inherited from its old connection with the primary system of the Third Republic.

The Official Instructions of 1887 and 1923, along with the modifications contained in the Official Instructions of 1945 retained their legal standing until 1969 and the onset of the rénovation pédagogique. Thus for the purposes of the present chapter, the "traditional" elementary school is not defined in chronological terms, but as a continuing tradition in which the values inherited from the Third Republic were increasingly juxtaposed in official policy with response to the pressures from the post-elementary stages. This desire for continuity runs through almost all official texts during the whole period from 1887 to 1969 and even beyond and the major texts governing elementary school pedagogy stressed this debt to the past. The 1923 and 1945 Instructions echoed the original texts, being presented as modifications designed to achieve more fully the principles established in 1887; in the case of the latter text, this aim referred to the 1923 Instructions as well.

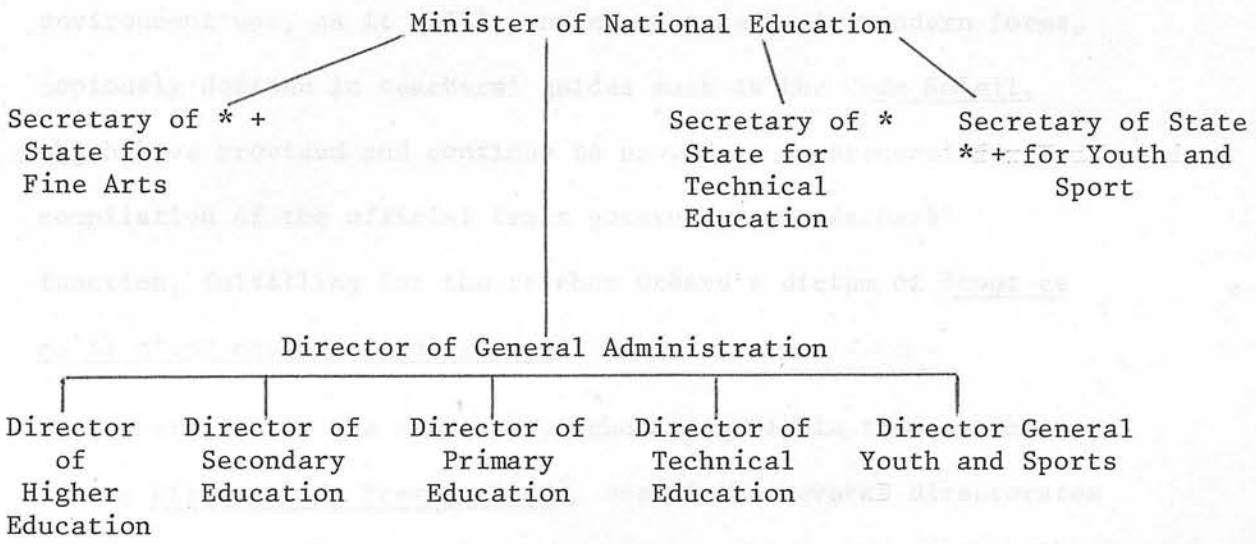
This meant that two sets of values were increasingly juxtaposed in official policy. The first, deriving from the primary school of the Third Republic, laid emphasis on a wide curriculum through which the elementary school had shared in the aims of the primary school as a whole. The second, reflecting the views of the secondary professorate, placed increasing emphasis on concentration on the basic skills of language and number, to the exclusion of the wider curricular horizons, which were regarded as the concern of the succeeding stages in the educational process.

This chapter is devoted to the first of these aspects, to an examination of the machinery which sustained the values of the elementary school and the nature of the curriculum prescription which embodied these values. In addition, there is also the important question of how far even official theory, backed by the legislative and administrative power of the centralised system of state education, passed into the everyday practice of the schools, a point which has direct bearing on the exact nature of the tensions in elementary school curric ulum. Finally, the chapter will examine some of the early attempts to reform the pedagogy of the elementary school and the problems faced by the innovator in the face of a centrally controlled system of mass education.

A. The control and administration of elementary education.

It would be superfluous here to outline the full machinery of the control and administration of the French education system prior to the reforms of the Ministry at successive points during the Fifth Republic. The main features of the system up to 1960 are outlined in Fig. 2.[1] What is of more immediate concern for the present topic is the place of the elementary school within this structure and the effects which this structure had on the development and pedagogy of the school. The framework within which the school functioned had been defined in its essentials by the end of the 19th century, save for a few points of detail, and this system remained unchanged in almost all of its main

FIGURE 2 THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION PRIOR TO 1960



* Previously Directors

\+ Later Separate ministries

Source; L'Organisation de L'Enseignement en France. La Documentation Francaise, Paris. 1952.

aspects into the 1960's. Reference has already been made to the corresponding stability of the Official Instructions for the pedagogy of the school over the same period. Thus the teacher worked within a firmly established and ordered administrative environment, with almost all aspects of school life prescribed by a range of legal texts. This administrative environment was, as it still continues to be in its modern forms, copiously defined in teachers' guides such as the Code Soleil, which have provided and continue to provide a comprehensive compilation of the official texts governing the teachers' function, fulfilling for the teacher Grĕard's dictum of "tout ce qu'il n'est pas permis d'ignorer".

Until 1960, the elementary school was within the control of the Direction du Premier Degré, one of the several directorates of the French system, each one of which served a separate part of the system and handled all matters relating to that part. These powerful territorial interests represented a considerable brake on the power of the Ministry, each directorate representing in effect a system in itself, to be defended against others and extended where possible. Each had its own administrative and teaching staff, with whom the directorate tended to make common cause in pursuing the interests of its sector. Conversely, SNI might leap to the defence of its own Director where the latter was threatened by outside forces. The duplication of functions occasioned by this system may be gauged from the complaint of the Minister to the reform commission that 90% of all

administrative activities were common to all directorates, in that, for example, there was not a primary and a secondary way of granting sick leave. [2] The obstacle presented to reform sometimes led Ministers, for example Marie in 1953, to attempt to reconcile these conflicting interests in such a way as to diminish the coherence of a reform project. The effects on the system occasionally compounded the anomalies which had developed in the unco-ordinated growth of the system; for example, the primary directorate in the post-war period became dependent on the secondary for the supply of staff to teacher-training establishments for primary teachers, due to the introduction of the requirement of the baccalaureate. Above all, for the elementary school, the corporatist competition of the directorates over the control of the new lower secondary school proposed in successive post-war reform projects served to contribute further to the diffusion of attention away from the elementary school, already evident in the ambitions of the teachers' union and for that matter new recruits to the écoles normales.

In the day to day functioning of the system, the authority of the central administration was represented by the inspectorate. In the primary system, two levels were especially important. At the national level, the post of Inspecteur Général du Premier Degré was a recent creation dating from 1930, which brought the primary into line with the secondary. Eight in number, these inspectors served as the link between the Ministry and the departmental organisation of the schools, with the expressed aim of keeping the former in touch with developments and needs in the primary schools.

The creation of these posts was welcomed as an enhancement of the status of the elementary and primary school and according to Georges Auriac a visit from an Inspecteur-Général was a considerable honour for a primary teacher, giving the latter a sense of being "nearer the sun".[3] These inspectors also had considerable influence on the formulation of official policy and the direction of official attitudes to pedagogical questions.

The official with whom the teacher came into regular and important contact was the Inspecteur Primaire as he was commonly known, although his full title was Inspecteur d'Enseignement Primaire. The primary inspector worked under the aegis of the Inspecteur d'Académie, who exercised overall control of education in the département. Each primary inspector was responsible for a district or circonscription, within the department, usually entailing supervision of about 300 teachers, although this might range from 150 in rural areas to 500 in Paris. The primary inspector was the immediate hierarchical superior of the teacher. These officials enjoyed the distinction of being appointed through the medium of a specific examination leading to the Certificat D'Aptitude à L'Inspection des Ecoles Primaires et Direction des Ecoles Normales, an examination encompassing both theoretical understanding of education and practical work in the form of a report on a visit to a class. The examination was open to both primary and secondary personnel with five years of teaching experience. (Prior to 1945, the requirement for instituteurs had been 10 years but the conditions were made the same for both categories after the war.)

The former primary teacher, however, would be debarred from the service in his own department for 15 years after appointment to the inspectorate. [4]

The primary inspectorate was also the sole position of hierarchical advancement, (as opposed to advancement up to the age range of pupils or to the directorship of a school, a post which carried no separate status until 1966), while even this advancement, could only be gained in competition with teachers from the secondary schools. (Further rise in status to Inspecteur d'Académie depended on possession of the secondary teaching qualification, the CAPES.) In addition, the post-war primary inspectorate offered a contrast with the pre-war predominance of primary personnel recruited through the écoles normales supérieures of the primary sector, which had lost their distinctive role in this respect with the dissolution of their traditional cadre during the four years of their eclipse during the Vichy regime, although the two establishments did still run courses leading to the licence. This breakdown of the old closed world of the primary school implied a further effect, although it is seldom made specific in educational debate, in that while the elementary classes were under increasing pressure to give priority to preparation for the secondary schools through concentration on the basics, a major proportion of the inspectorate were themselves products of the secondary schools. While no precise figures are readily available for the proportion of secondary teachers entering the inspectorate, the injunctions of the primary inspector André Ferré to teachers

in training on the possibilities of access to the inspectorate give some indication of the advantages that the professeur appears to have enjoyed.

Ferré presented this possibility in terms of the Napoleonic principle of the "career open to talents"; as every soldier had in his cartridge-box the baton of a maréchal, so too did every instituteur possess the opportunity to progress to the rank of inspector.[5] From the outline of the structure of the system given above, it will be clear that the possibilities were strictly limited in number in any case, to about 1 in 300 of all primary staff, (assuming that all inspectors were drawn from these aspirants, which they were not). Ferré, however, advised all ambitious primary teachers to gain a licence as the first step to this promotion, which served to weight the scales heavily in favour of secondary staff. (In any case, such teachers as gained this degree tended to gravitate quickly into the secondary schools anyway, as did increasing numbers of the products of the écoles normales, without benefit of degree qualifications.) This requirement also served to exclude a large proportion of teachers from whom preparation of such qualifications was impossible from a rural classroom and the special courses run at the écoles normales supérieures of St. Cloud and Fontenay were necessarily limited in numbers.

The primary inspector exercised a combination of administrative, pedagogic and disciplinary functions, although throughout the period covered by this thesis inspectors and teachers alike tended

to lament the predominance of the first of these functions. The important pedagogical function of the inspector was exercised in two ways. First, he presided over the annual conférence pédagogique at the start of the school year, thus being attended by all the teachers in his district. These conferences were originally introduced in 1880 as a means of countering the professional isolation suffered by many teachers teaching in rural schools. The subjects for discussion, up to the late 1960's, were laid down by the Ministry and incidentally provide a fair guide to official pre-occupations or pressing problems at particular times. The conferences, however, developed into something of an annual ritual in the eyes of teachers and were the subject of increasing criticism throughout the 1950's and 1960's. Most teacher complaints present a picture of an audience in their Sunday best assembling to hear a monologue from the inspector. Nonetheless the conferences did have some effect on the pedagogy of the schools in that the teacher was expected to provide some evidence on the inspector's next visit that he had given due attention to what the inspector had said. The conferences had a more central function in that they served as the medium through which official policy was communicated; until the issue to teachers of the 1972 Official Instructions for the teaching of French, Official Instructions had never been communicated directly to the teaching profession, but instead had been communicated through the inspectorate, in part through these conferences. There was a further value in the conferences from the teachers' point of view in that it allowed them to identify and

adapt to the views of their inspector against the background of not infrequent divisions in official thinking or ambiguities in the official texts. On the other hand, as will be evident when we come to some of the principles on which the Instructions were based.

this function was not totally in keeping with the spirit of the texts.

The second function of the inspector was the annual visit to each teacher for the purposes of compiling a report and awarding the teacher a mark out of 20 as assessment of his professional activity. The report was presented to the teacher for his signature, although in a case of dispute, the matter might be referred to the departmental consultative organs on which both teachers and administration were represented. The visit of the inspector was regarded with a degree of awe by the teachers but this has to be set against the fact that for the rural teacher, the inspector might represent the sole professional contact of the school year; this was especially important for the beginning teacher and many of the new recruits of the post-war years also lacked professional training. This supportive aspect of the inspector's role seems to have been the most affected by the conflict between the inspector's administrative and his pedagogical responsibilities and it was in this respect that teachers tended to lament the lack of time which curtailed the inspector's involvement largely to the process of assessment.

The practice of awarding a teaching mark was introduced at the outset of compulsory education in 1887, although this was

only made an annual requirement in 1921, and this process, always unpopular with teachers, dominated the relationship between teachers and inspectors throughout the period studied in this thesis. In general, the profession appears to have found the process somewhat threatening, while some teachers have found it rather humiliating, an impression which Ferré's advice to trainees tends to reinforce. Ferré enjoined the young teacher to treat the visitor "with deference but without obsequiousness" and to balance the intimidating ambience of the visit by remembering that the inspector himself had formerly been a teacher and that he was well meaning and a valuable source of support. On the other hand, Ferré also instructed the teacher to respond quickly to the arrival of the hierarchical superior, to offer him the teacher's seat, pupils' work and other appropriate documentation and then to continue teaching as normally, for the benefit of the pupils and not for the inspector. Ferré also pointed out that the inspector must not find a crossword or knitting in the teacher's desk! [6]

A debate in the weekly L'Education Nationale in 1962 demonstrated various sides to the issue of teacher - inspector relationships. The teacher who launched the debate complained that teachers invariably saw the inspector as an intimidating figure whose power over the career of the teacher - the teaching mark was critical in applications for posts - was combined with a general tendency to pedagogic manias and sectarianism in the choice of methods. A teacher might see nothing of an inspector for several years and then be judged on a brief inspection with little human

contact. The resultant fear of the inspector thus tended to produce in teachers a false conformity based on the fear to evolve a coherent pedagogy of their own.[7] The article thus raised several points central to the function of the inspector in the French elementary school. In the first place, the teaching mark itself was regarded with an element of cynicism by teachers because of the close correlation between teaching mark and seniority. This was not exclusively a matter of recognising evolving professional competence since there seemed to be no countervailing evidence of recognition of pedagogic decline; some inspectors admitted later, at a time when the teaching mark was under greater criticism as being incompatible with the changing relationships sought by the Ministry during the rénovation pédagogique, that they had always used the teaching mark as a means of providing a continuing stimulus to effort. Thus a beginning teacher, of whatever level of competence, might expect a modest mark in order to leave something for him to aim at in the future.

The question of methods was also a vexed one and one central to the relationships between the different parties involved in the educational process. The Official Instructions left teachers a nominal freedom of choice in the question of choice of methods, subject to the general principles of activity and observation reiterated in successive texts. (There were also one or two specific prohibitions, such as the use of the inductive method in arithmetic.) Where the inspector was seen as a partisan of a particular method - or perhaps especially as an opponent of a

method - he might be seen as infringing a liberty conferred by legislation. This was also a delicate point in the history of the pedagogy of the French primary and elementary schools in that both the Official Instructions of 1923 and although to a lesser extent, the Instructions of 1945 both offered as justification for their appearance that the ideals of their predecessors had been lost in practice, although these ideals remained entirely valid. This formulation rested on the assumption that not only teachers had been responsible for losing these ideals in practice, but also on the inculpation of authors of textbooks and inspectors - frequently also the authors of textbooks - as equally guilty of creating the gap between theory and practice, both in content and method. [8]

The reactions to the article referred to above generally confirmed the rather negative reaction of teachers to the process of formal inspections as well as certain differences in perception of the process in the two groups. One inspector advanced the view that teachers had created their own mythology of inspection in the same way as some inspectors had done. This latter aspect was promptly illustrated by another inspector, who first quoted a succession of circulars from the 1890's onwards to illustrate the hierarchical realities of the inspector-teacher relationship and then lamented the difficulty of bringing teachers into line with the terms of the Official Instructions. [9]

The attitude of the majority of teachers and inspectors probably lay between these two extremes. In the case of the

teachers, this was largely borne out by the findings of Berger and Benjamin, [10] which showed a range and moderation of view not always present among those drawn into the periodical bouts of debate in the educational press. It was true that some teachers stressed the distant and hierarchical nature of the inspectors' approach, which seemed to be associated in the minds of teachers with the secondary school origins of many inspectors. On the other hand, $\frac{2}{3}$ of Berger and Benjamin's sample reported good relationships with their hierarchical superiors. In addition, if the inspector was, in Alain's words, a gendarme whose first task was to see that the teacher taught rather than that the children learned, [11] he was also an acknowledged hierarchical superior whose support could be highly beneficial against interference from outwith the hierarchy of the educational system, notably from local politics. As already noted, the inspector's visit might be the only professional support enjoyed by a rural teacher in the course of the school year. The nature of the task limited this latter possibility; visiting 300 teachers in the course of a school year of 210 days necessarily limited the time available for each visit, while this problem was exacerbated by travel problems in rural areas. In practice, the official requirement of annual inspections seems not to have passed totally into practice and teacher complaints about inspection are balanced by some complaints about absence of it. One or two examples appear of teachers whose inspectoral visits were few and far between because of remoteness or other incidental hazards. Auriac cited the case of an institutrice

teaching in a village in the Corrèze, in a school 300 metres from the nearest houses, accessible only by footpath. Her predecessor having been burgled in broad daylight, the teacher had taken the precaution of keeping a large guard dog in the classroom. This animal added to the difficulty of regular inspection of the classroom by his attitude to inspectors, having attacked and bitten one of these officials. Auriac argued that the teacher was perfectly justified in her precautions in view of the isolation of her situation. [12]

The control of the individual school, where this was not a single teacher school, rested in the hands of the Directeur d'Ecole. This post also dated from the early years of the state system, being established in 1894, but until 1966, the director remained essentially a teacher in charge of the administration of the school. His authority was, (and is), that of primus inter pares, the director having no higher place in the educational hierarchy than the teachers of the school. The director was only permitted some discharge from teaching duties in schools of more than 500 pupils or more than 5 classes, retaining a minimum, however, of four hours per week of teaching. The responsibilities of the post included the maintenance of school legislation within the establishment, the general administrative functioning of the school and the oversight of beginning teachers. The drawing up of the emploi de temps, posted by law in every classroom, was the responsibility of the director under the control of the primary

inspector and the director was also responsible for contact with parents.

The role of the director of the elementary school raised a number of ambiguities, which have not altogether disappeared at the present time. The post offered little in either material terms or in status, although it was the sole advancement within the elementary school open to those teachers who did not aspire to the inspectorate. In the absence of clearly defined hierarchical status, official pronouncements tended to stress the influence of the director's personality, or his qualities of leadership. Thus the Inspecteur Général, Roger Thabault argued that the competence, activity and character on which the authority of the director was founded was the only basis of authority within the French educational system.[13] To install someone lacking these qualities in charge of a school was to compromise the futures of all the pupils. Those in charge of schools were inclined to take a rather different view and complained of the difficulty of obtaining discharge from teaching duties; one director summed up this function pessimistically as that of a post-box for the school. While the post was eventually more clearly defined in 1966, against the opposition of SNI which feared the creation of another hierarchical superior, the position of the director continued to remain ambiguous and complaints of the difficulty of the job still appeared in the 1970's.

The director of the school was assisted in his task - in

theory - by the Conseil des Maîtres, established in 1908. This teachers' council provided, in the words of the Code Soleil, "for the free exchange of views in a friendly setting", these deliberations being definitive only after the approval of the inspector. [14] In practice, however, the director was equally open to calculated pressure from teaching staff. The latter were represented on the departmental committees by which directors were nominated to posts. According to the Picard Report [15] submitted to the Langevin/Wallon Commission, this teacher pressure often lay behind the withdrawal of the time allowance for administration, thus serving teacher interests by keeping the director fully occupied.

The Picard report argued that the lack of defined status in the post militated against any effective pedagogic leadership, a problem emphasised by the slowness of promotion to this post. This in turn was linked to the problem of the relationship between the teaching mark and seniority and the majority of directors during the 1940's and 1950's did not reach the post until about the age of 50, although the terms of the law permitted appointment from the age of 21 onwards. This again contributed to a certain conservatism if not inactivity among directors close to the end of their careers, as the primary teacher retired at 55. Picard's proposed solution of giving the post defined status was not taken up for twenty years and then in a form which left the major questions of status largely unsolved. On the other hand, Berger and Benjamin's evidence suggested that the problem of status was perhaps less critical than it appeared as about 75% of teachers reported good relationships with their directors. [16]

The Official Instructions and the hierarchy of officials were not the only influences on the curriculum of the elementary school. While programmes might be defined in considerable detail, the teacher enjoyed a certain freedom in the choice of textbooks, although the Department of the Seine laid down an approved list from which such choice should be made. This served both as an element of freedom and as a constraint on the teacher. If, subject to the authority of the Recteur of the académie, the latter could draw up his own list of books, this important prerogative had to be exercised with care and restraint. Prior to the early 1970's, the costs of books fell either on parents or on the caisse d'école established by the commune. Either way, this placed the teacher under the obligation, officially specified, [17] of avoiding incurring excessive costs for families by too frequent changes of textbooks or of avoiding conflict with the local elected officials. The official text on this matter put the children on their honour not to scribble in margins or otherwise deface textbooks. This provision made for a certain stability in the curriculum of the elementary school quite outwith the official curriculum prescription.

The school textbook had a further influence on the curriculum in that it represented the principal medium whereby the programmes were translated into the sequence of content treated in the various subjects taught in the school. The teachers were generally aware of the Official Instructions and Programmes, largely through their various journals or through the intermediary of the inspector, but the demand of Ferré, that teachers should know the content of the

official texts as thoroughly as they knew their names and addresses, [18] was rather unrealistic given the volume of legislation involved. In practice, the author of the textbook served this function in the day to day life of the school; it may perhaps be argued that if the Instructions and Programmes could be differentiated as components within the official texts, the inspector was the provider of the former, the textbook of the latter. This led to considerable criticism, however, on the grounds that all too often textbooks supplanted the programmes and above all tended to add further to content already verging on the excessive in the official texts. This was a criticism to which the official texts of 1923 had already lent some weight and it was a criticism which recurred with increasing frequency during the 1950's and 1960's.

The weekly pedagogical press also had a major influence on the work of the school and teachers had access to a wide variety of material from semi-official, commercial and union sources. L'Ecole Publique, associated with L'Education Nationale, and Documents pour la Classe both emanated from the premises of the Institut Pédagogique National. Among the commercial publications, the Journal des Instituteurs et Institutrices and L'Ecole et la Vie carried brief editorial sections but were largely devoted to lesson plans, in the latter case eventually produced in the form of detachable sheets to be retained by the teacher as required. The Manuel Général de L'Instruction Publique was the epitome of such publications, devoted almost entirely to a weekly collection of lesson plans and the major purveyor of "ready-made" pedagogy.

As the title, which was not modernised in line with the change from L'Instruction Publique to L'Education Nationale in the title of the Ministry in 1932, indicates, the Manuel Général was most representative of traditional attitudes in the primary system and its demise not long before the launching of the rénovation pédagogique in 1969 was as appropriately symbolic in its own setting as the demise of the Progressive Education Association in the U.S.A. in 1955. Lastly, the journals published by the teachers' unions served in part similar functions; along with union matters and general comment on educational issues, L'Ecole Libératrice, (SNI) and Syndicalisme Universitaire, (SGEN), also provided substantial pedagogic sections. The development of the former illustrated the development of tensions within the union in interesting fashion. As an increasing number of instituteurs penetrated into the secondary schools, a development confirmed by the creation of the collèges d'enseign général out of the old cours complémentaires in 1959, the diverging interests within the union led to the need to publish separate editions, differentiated by their pedagogical content, from 1960 onwards.

Textbooks and such periodicals alike were increasingly seen in the post-war period as contributing towards the overloading of the school curriculum and towards a "ready-made" pedagogy in contradiction to the principles expressed in the Official Instructions, so that the bookish and didactic replaced the activity of the pupil. On the other hand, there were other ways of viewing the reliance on such devices and the problems to which

they contributed. In the first place, the programmes themselves tended towards excessive ambition and were also prone to ambiguities since important changes in successive texts contradicted the expressed desire for continuity. The anomalies of the programmes may thus be said to have invited a degree of reliance on textbooks and published lesson plans as a means of resolving tensions, a solution given some legitimacy by the extent to which inspectors participated in the preparation of such material. In addition, the professional and geographic isolation of many of the teaching profession has to be taken into account; rural teachers were deprived of ready access to libraries and other resources. Finally, many post-war recruits to teaching were to enter the profession without benefit of professional training and such entrants often began their careers in rural schools. In such circumstances, such teachers could hardly be blamed for seeking all the support they could get - and both the Journal des Instituteurs and L'Ecole Libératrice deliberately set out to provide the maximum support for untrained beginners, in itself a worthy response to a crisis both for the educational system and the individuals concerned. The criticism of teachers as being slaves to their textbooks and to the clockwork precision with which they laid down a progression through a programme was, however, to be a recurring theme right up to the time of the rénovation pédagogique and there was some evidence after 1969 that the system had not yet reached a modus vivendi with the school textbook.

Finally, some mention must be made of the question of

relations with parents. Until the mid-1970's, elementary schools tended to keep parents at arm's length, a characteristic in part inherited from the general desire to preserve the school from outside interference but also arising from the reticence of teachers. It is true that the views of parents were taken into account to some extent, notably in the matter of costs and textbooks mentioned above, but this seems to have been a political rather than a pedagogical matter. As far as contact between schools and parents was concerned, this was the responsibility of the director, under the terms of legislation dating from 1936, which established the livret scolaire as the means of communication between home and school. While individual contact was easy enough for parents of children in rural schools, group contact was much more difficult except for fund-raising and very few schools held organised meetings for parents. Relationships were largely dominated by an air of mutual defensiveness.

Parents' organisations have for a long time been a significant element in the system at national level. The organisation most concerned with the elementary school during the first half of the period under study was the Fédération des Conseils des Parents D'Elèves des Ecoles Publiques, usually known as the Cornec Federation after its long-serving President. This organisation was established by SNI and the Ligue D'Enseign[illegible] in 1947 and still shares accommodation with the former in its national office. The Federation tended to share the main concerns of SNI, especially its preoccupation with laïcite.

The other major federation involved in elementary school questions is the Fédération des Parents D'Elèves de L'Enseignement Publique, dating from 1910, but until the 1960's exclusively concerned with the secondary schools. This federation has also been most commonly known by the name of its chairmen, Armand and then Lagarde. (This characteristic of the associations may be due in part to the presidential style with which they have tended to be run, but probably stem from the unmanageable proportions of their titles - even when reduced to initialisms). There is also the Fédération Nationale des Associations des Parents des Eleves de L'Enseignement Publique, established in 1932, but with only about a tenth of the membership of the Cornec Federation. This grouping, the Giraudeau federation, concentrates its attention mainly on secondary schools.

The relationships between the parents' federations have tended to parallel the competitive, corporatist concerns common to French educational politics, serving largely as an extension of such politics by other means. While their views on reform will figure largely in later chapters, these have been less remarkable than their disputes with each other. The Armand/Lagarde has been quick to proclaim its independence from teacher interests, a claim supported by Le Figaro,[19] and has accused Cornec of sacrificing parental interests to those of teachers, SNI, (and the secondary union SNES),[20] of directing parents to parents' organisations linked to their unions. The Armand/Lagarde has also accused elementary teachers of consigning literature from

that federation to the dustbin and only distributing material from Cornec. [21] The latter, on the other hand, has shown little faith in the former's independence, seeing it as "trop proche au pouvoir" [22] and the continuous support of the Armand/Lagarde for official policy under the Fifth Republic provokes a certain wry amusement in educational establishments. It is certainly true that until the Haby reforms of the mid-1970's, the Armand/Lagarde had consistently supported every aspect of official policy and even in the context of the Haby reform, if the federation for the first time found something to criticise, it was also the only significant body to find anything favourable to say about the reforms.

This may be taking the question outwith the time-scale of the traditional elementary school, but it does serve to show the light in which parental involvement in education has been viewed for a long time. As one of the staff of I.N.R.P., (the successor to I.P.N.), put it to the author, "parents are not a true interest group". In the light of this assumption, French education seems to have regarded parental participation as justified only in the service of other interests.

B. The curriculum of the elementary school

Having outlined the framework within which the elementary school curriculum was defined and implemented, it is now necessary to examine the main aims of the school, the programmes by which these were given practical expression and the extent to which the aspirations of the legislator passed into practice.

Reference has already been made to the stability and continuity expressed in the terms of the successive texts governing the curriculum. The Official Instructions of 1887, 1923 and 1945 present a very similar view of the aims of the school and the last two define themselves very firmly in terms of the values expressed in the first text, at the time of the creation of the primary school system. The 1923 Instructions went so far as to justify interfering with the founding text only in terms of the extent to which the still valid ideals of the former had been lost in practice by teachers, inspectors and the authors of textbooks, while the 1945 text set out "to restore the elementary school to its old simplicity and efficacy". [1] On the other hand, this appearance of continuity is somewhat misleading, as the 1923 and 1945 texts both represented significant evolution in the pedagogy of the school. In the former case, the essential change was the replacement of the original concentric programmes of Gréard by "progressive" programmes leading on to new material each year. The 1923 text was also influenced by the classes primaires of the lycées and looked forward to the intended harmonisation of the two sets of programmes in 1926. The 1945 text reflected the beginnings of the post-war concern for the primacy of the basic skills, by increasing the time allowed for French and arithmetic at the expense of history, geography and the leçon de choses.

Despite these significant changes, the two later texts reiterated the continuing values of 1887 and the 1923 Instructions

quoted the earlier text verbatim on such matters as teaching methods and moral education. The 1945 text was essentially a change of details within this established framework. Mention should also be made of the Instructions issued by Jean Zay in 1938; [2] these were intended to encourage more active approaches to education and while they were, strictly speaking, concerned with the upper course and the new cours fin d'étudés, the nature of the system, with so many small schools, meant that such change if applied would influence teaching in the other classes of the school.

These texts are not quoted merely as historical background for they represented the official view of the curriculum until 1969, although progressively modified by a series of circulars in response to specific problems which were to emerge during the 1950's and 1960's. (In some matters, these Instructions even survived the onset of the rénovation pédagogique in 1969 and in 1971, prior to the appearance of the new Instructions for the teaching of French, the Ministry reminded innovative teachers that the only Instructions then in force were those of 1923.)[3] The desire for the appearance, at least, of continuity, coupled with the changes brought about by the successive texts, posed a number of problems for the schools. Between 1887 and 1969, no one text definitively replaced its predecessor or predecessors, which thus remained in force. This meant that the curriculum provision was created in an additive fashion leading in turn to the existence of a mosaic of official prescription which made

no attempt to reconcile change and stability but merely juxtaposed the two - the change in the practical details, the stability in the aims of the school - without endeavouring to resolve any anomalies which might arise.

The texts governing the curriculum of the elementary school represented a unified body of prescription, covering the full range of the curriculum, which may be seen as implying a global perception of elementary school pedagogy. In the face of changes in the last decade towards a pattern of preparation of subject programmes by specialist teams, the loss of this unity has sometimes been regretted, for example by the editors of the 1973 edition of Leterrier's Programmes et Instructions. [4] On the other hand, this retrospective view of a body of unified prescription reflecting a homogeneous conception of elementary education is somewhat misleading in that the provisions were highly fragmented, both in terms of timetables and in the programmes themselves, a point regretted by the editors of the same collection in 1954. [5] The timetable laid down in 1945, in force until 1956, is outlined in Table 2

The uniformity of the official view of the curriculum of the schools also conflicted to a large extent with the practical circumstances of the system in that no allowance appears to have been made for the existence of a majority of small rural schools, in which one or two teachers had to adjust the programmes to a full range of courses from the préparatoire to the fin d'études. The only acknowledgment of this problem in official texts was in the case of physical education. The realities of the rural

TABLE 2 THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TIMETABLE, 1945-1956

CLASS DISCIPLINE	CP	CE	CM
Moral Education	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$
Reading	10	$6\frac{1}{4}$	$3\frac{1}{2}$
Writing	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$
French Language	$2\frac{1}{2}$	5	$6\frac{1}{4}$
History/Geography	-	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2
Arithmetic	$3\frac{3}{4}$	$3\frac{3}{4}$	5
Observation (leçon de choses)	-	1	2
Drawing/Handicrafts	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$
Singing	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$
Activités dirigées	$2\frac{1}{4}$	1	1
Physical Education	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{4}$
Recreations	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$
	30	30	30

Source: Arrêté of 17th October, 1945. B.O.E.N. p.3486.

schools also raised a further problem as teachers tended to regard the fin d'études as paramount, a point criticised frequently by inspectors in the immediate post-war years.[6] This also left unresolved the question of examination preparation; the entrée en sixième and the CEPE in its new role as a terminal examination existed quite separately in the urban school; in the rural school, the single teacher in a one-teacher school was still faced with the conflicting demands. The proceedings of the Langevin/Wallon Commission did devote some attention to the rural school but this was largely in terms of the problems of providing universal secondary education rather than in the adaptation of programmes.

The latter problem, however, was drawn to the attention of the Commission during one of the conferences held in the provinces to explain the main lines of the proposed reform. In Oloron, (Basses-Pyrenées), the primary inspector, M. Dupont, pointed to the difficulties; whereas results in such schools were often honourable and sometimes remarkable, this depended on the application of active methods, from which developments teachers were largely cut off.[7] Such development was only feasible by truncating teacher responsibilities by joining together boys' and girls', but this proposal only applied to communes with a population over 500, at which point the obligation to provide separate schools came into effect. The same sense of isolation appeared in the reports of the conferences held in Grenoble and Chambéry, where the teachers expressed a need for local pedagogical institutes to help them keep up to date.[8]

To the above contradictions must be added the contradictions of the texts themselves, in what Prost has called "the juxtaposition of the incompatible", [9] that is the conflict between the advanced pedagogical principles expressed in the Instructions and the heavy and detailed demands of the accompanying Programmes. The Instructions laid great stress on the importance of la méthode active, in which according to the 1887 Instructions, the teacher and pupils contribute in turn to the learning process; this principle was reiterated in the 1923 Instructions. [10] The stress on activity was accompanied by an equal emphasis on the importance of the concrete as the basis of all learning by the child who should proceed from the concrete to the abstract as well as "from the simple to the complex". Finally, the educational process was to start with the child and proceed "from the known to the unknown".

The author of the 1923 text was confident of the attainment of these principles, (although presumably Jean Zay was less so), and asserted that "the active method has entered our habits to the extent that we sometimes use it without even realising it." [11] (Guy Avanzini has labelled this style of pronouncement as the "euphorico-emphatic"; [12] such pronouncements will crop up frequently in this study and the style is not confined to the Ministry). In turn, the Official Instructions of 1945 looked back to their predecessors and undertook to provide French children with "le grand bain de réalisme dont ils ont besoin". [13] The subject

which epitomised this aspect of the pedagogy of the elementary school was the leçon de choses, based on observation by the child and thus having neither textbook nor programme. Somewhat ironically, the 1945 text reduced the time for this element.

The general tenor of the Instructions is thus easily interpretable as child-centred or progressive in the English sense of the term, an interpretation reinforced by the habitual reference to Rousseau, along with Montaigne, in successive texts. This interpretation, however, raises two sets of problems. One is a matter of translation. J. Lynch points to the "epoch-making" character of these Instructions of 1887 in advocating "in effect activity methods, the introduction of concretization before abstractions and a recognition of the active role of the pupil in his own learning." [14] It is reasonable to underline the radical nature of these Instructions in their own right as pedagogical innovations, but perhaps easy to misinterpret the nature of the right. The quotation above refers to terms which in English are indissolubly linked with progressive theories of education, a phenomenon reinforced by the slogans which have dichotomised the traditional-progressive debate and which crop up in official reports such as Plowden. On the other hand, in French pedagogical debate, la méthode active is the ideal to which both traditional and progressive theorists aspire. Whereas it would seem very odd for a proponent of traditional educational values in England to argue for activity methods, a traditional educationist like

Jean Château may quite reasonably present his theories as leading to the true active method.[15] This then becomes the point at issue rather than the juxtaposition of "active" with "formal" in English debate. One may thus see the affirmation of 1923 in a different light, as exemplifying the truth that la méthode active had so firmly entered French educational ideals that all educational aims were conceived in accordance with this criterion.

The second problem concerns the terminology common both to the Rousseauian child-centred and to the positivist view of education. The latter dominated the intellectual climate of the early years of the Third Republic, notably in the thinking of Jules Ferry, the guiding spirit in the establishment of the lay school. This in turn requires consideration of what was meant by "active" or by "the concrete". In the former case, Jean Piaget has argued that official pedagogy in France tended to treat "activity" as essentially a figurative process leading to the formation of a mental copy, rather than an operational process in which the child was allowed to act on his environment.[16] The positivist conception of active learning still appeared in the 1945 Instructions - "faire passer les faits sous les sens".[17] Roger Gal, member of the Langevin/Wallon Commission and later director of the research body in I.P.N., criticised another aspect of the official view of active methods, that of "manualism" and physical activity, derived from what Gal saw as a false juxtaposition of "l'école active" and "l'école assise" in the works of the psychologist Binet and others.[18] Further illustrations

of the confusions may be found in the aspects of educational development which were identified with greater "activity" on the art of the pupil. Such claims had been advanced for the introduction of illustrations to textbooks in the 1920's and for the increasing use of film. In Piaget's view, this misunderstanding of the nature of activity in learning led to a new "verbalisme d'image" to replace or reinforce the primacy of the printed word.[19]

The formulae of the Instructions in specifying a progression "from known to the unknown, from the simple to the complex" may also be seen in terms of something other than child-centred education. The prescription "from the known to the unknown" was not universally applicable in any case; where the child's first language was not French, the school showed a profound hostility to what the child already knew, a hostility echoed by the Langevin/Wallon Commission in their deliberations on German speaking children in Alsace-Lorraine.[20] The formula was also open to some misinterpretation in any case and teachers on occasion applied a perversely literal interpretation of the maxim by teaching history in reversed chronological order of topics. The Official Instructions of 1923 prohibited this practice, taking the argument to something of a logical absurdity by dwelling on the inconsistency of teachers who adopted this approach but did not reverse the chronological order within each topic by treating it from end to beginning.[21]

This practice was still to be found in the post-war period and inspectors still needed to point out periodically that it was officially forbidden.

The principle of "from the simple to the complex", formulated before the advent of child psychology, also presented problems in that the sequence of instruction laid down by the programmes reflected an essentially adult, logical conception of the child. The tensions surrounding this principle were most obviously apparent in the controversy over the method of teaching reading - although in this case the Ministry kept out of the quarrel and has never prescribed or forbidden any particular method of teaching reading. The majority view among teachers and inspectors was that the analytical or syllabic method of teaching reading conformed to the logic of the Official Instructions, by proceeding from perception of the letter, through that of the syllable to perception of the whole word, a progression paralleled further up the school in the Instructions for composition, which recommended a progression from the phrase through the sentence to the paragraph. This view of reading was increasingly contested by advocates of the global method, syncrétiste in emphasis and inspired by the work of the Belgian Ovide Decroly. The debate over the teaching of reading has persisted to the present day and encapsulates the positions of the traditional and progressive schools of educational theory at the purely pedagogic level, although practice in most schools lies between the two extremes.

The stress on the concrete was limited by other factors. The 1945 Instructions present the concrete again in figurative terms for the teaching of arithmetic, defining "concrete" number in terms of e.g. 15 pupils, an interpretation which continued into textbooks in the form of problems drawn from the " real world". (The latter, however, tended to suffer from the ravages of inflation, given the previously outlined constraints on the too rapid change of textbooks, and insepctors were wont to remark wistfully on the prices of such items as petrol in school textbook problems.) In this matter, too, the emphasis on the concrete was accompanied by the prohibition of ambitions beyond this level in that the mathematical concepts underlying the skills of computation were expressly forbidden to the pupils of the elementary school by both the 1923 and the 1945 Instructions. The 1923 Instructions used the curious analogy of "self-government", a limited form of which they advocated for older pupils, but which did not entail a study of English as a necessary aid to the practice of the relevant skills.[22] The arithmetic Programme thus illustrated another facet of the general aims of the primary school in its original form and the ambivalence of the governing pedagogical principles may be related to the ambivalences in the goals set for the primary school pupil, which in turn influenced the elementary stage.

The general aims of the school were a mixture of ambition and humility in which broad and generous formulations were juxtaposed with the clear perception that the school prepared

its pupils for limited horizons. (There is an interesting paradox that the increasing access to secondary education which opened up the range of opportunities offered to primary school pupils should have been a source of pressure towards narrowing the curricular aspirations of the elementary school). The first of the texts, that of 1887, related the question of methods to that of aims in that the active method was juxtaposed not only to a mechanical progression through the chapters of a textbook but also to the teaching only of the basic skills of communication, the three R's. [23] This theme was taken up again by the 1923 Instructions, which sought to develop a broad range of qualities embracing the affective as well as the cognitive under the generally humanistic ethos of "faire d'abord des hommes". This encompassed the double aim of giving each pupil "a sum of knowledge appropriate to his future needs, then and above all, good habits of thought, an open and awakened intelligence, clear ideas, judgment, reflection, order and justice in thought and language". [24] In addition, the Instructions specifically related the aims of moral education to these affective qualities which the school sought to develop and much stress was laid on the development of l'esprit critique.

On the other hand, the continuing validity of the 1887 Instructions presented another conception of the "sum of knowledge" referred to above, in terms somewhat at odds with the high aspirations of 1923. According to the 1887 text, the task of the instituteur was not to teach much but to teach

well, a view which was quoted verbatim in the succeeding text. Nor did primary school pupils have time to waste in "otiose discussions, learned theories or scholastic curiosities", their sojourn of five or six years being barely sufficient to equip them with "the little treasure of ideas of which they were strictly in need".[25] The 1887 text referred to the primary school as providing a "rudimentary" education; the word "rudimentaire" was to be taken up as a pejorative by SNI in resisting being confined to the elementary school. This was the essential character of the school, providing a necessary minimum of knowledge for the masses, rather than developing an elite.

Thus the general aims of the elementary school, inherited from the primary school of which it had been a part, sought at once to combine the limited horizons of mass elementary education with the development of the whole man, a rudimentary education not confined to the rudiments of the three R's. In the post-war period, however, the elementary school was faced with a further contradiction in aims. The entrance examination for secondary education, the entrée en sixième, was in direct conflict with the broader aspects of the aims of the school in terms of curriculum and in conflict with the mass character of the provision of elementary education. In the first aspect, in contrast to the CEPE, which tested the whole range of the curriculum, the entrée en sixième was exclusively concerned with language and arithmetic. Secondly, the new examination

was the concern only of a minority of the pupils in the school. This was the source of some teacher opposition, but the view that the minority were worthy of special attention found some official support, notably from Inspecteur Général Georges Prévot who also argued that this concentration on the needs of the minority would have benefits for the rest of the class in setting high standards.[26] The curricular question was much less clear cut, in that there is much evidence to suggest that the entrée en sixième merely provided a different justification for an existing disparity between official aspirations and daily practice in the schools. In any case, the 1945 Instructions already represented a step in that direction in the strengthening of the timetable allocation for the basic skills, a step justified by one of Prévot's colleagues in terms of the poor results achieved by the schools.[27] That pupils learned badly and forgot quickly was the price of excessive ambition, notably the way in which the history and geography programmes had been inflated over the years - by authors of textbooks, administrators and examiners alike - and the return to the rudiments was intended to restore the spirit as well as the letter of the programmes.

This last point was the most interesting aspect of the case and illustrates the problems created by the continued existence of legally valid texts despite significant changes in the nature and function of the school. Within the body of prescription produced by this additive process of educational

change, it was not always easy to identify the spirit of the official texts, because this was open to a variety of interpretations, and the criticisms levied at the elementary school for neglecting the basics were balanced by the criticisms which focussed on the extent to which it had neglected the wider aspects of its aims and the other areas of the curriculum. There was ample in official policy to justify both points of view.

The general aims of the official pedagogy and the degree to which they were achieved in practice are given clearer focus in the programmes and the problems surrounding their implementation. The first place in the list of subjects was occupied by moral education, reinforced in the upper stages by civic education and exemplifying the outlook of a lay school system which did not permit religious education in schools. (This last point did not apply to Alsace-Lorraine and the presence of religious education in the schools of these provinces and clerical involvement in public schooling was source of great irritation to SNI). The place of moral education in the curriculum may be seen as exemplifying the primacy of affective aims in the schools of the Third Republic, at least in the minds of the legislators. To occupy first place in the list of subjects, however, may not necessarily mean to occupy first place in the concerns of the school; one may make comparison with English schooling in which religious education, as well as being the only subject taught compulsorily

in schools, also comes first in the list of subjects in official reports such as Plowden, but would hardly be described as illustrating the primacy of religious aims in English education. Moral education in France on the other hand was highly important to the founders of the school and the letter of Jules Ferry to the instituteurs in 1883, still printed in full in some teachers' guides in the 1960's, presented education as above all a moral undertaking.[28] In practice, however, the teaching of moral education seems to have given little satisfaction throughout the history of compulsory education and by the post-war period, there was some disillusion with it.

The 1887 Instructions for moral education saw the subject as resting on an entirely different plane from the rest of the educational programme, demanding less the process of rational argument and logical reasoning than the intensity of sentiment shown by the teacher, the vivacity of the impressions he created and the communicative warmth of his conviction.[29] This passage of the text perhaps best illustrates the concept of the teacher as the lay priest of the republic. The 1923 Instructions rejected this approach and indeed the whole idea of moral education as a "subject", arguing instead that it should permeate the whole curriculum and the whole life of the school, where it would be exemplified in the discipline of the establishment, based on a positive morality and "orienting free wills towards the good".[30] Practice, however, served to illustrate the difficulties of each interpretation. The latter

approach led to a diffusion of attention away from moral education while the provision of a specific timetable period encouraged didacticism and verbalism. The 1945 timetable restored the 15 minute causerie at the start of each school day but the years following were marked by complaints about the inefficacy of the teaching. Moral education in practice either made excessive demands on the understanding of the pupil, or on the emotional fervour of the teacher, while in the view of Jean Chatreix, the whole enterprise was vitiated by the lack of a sufficient basis of shared values in the population as a whole. [31] Henri Wallon cited the example of pupils of 10 learning a highly sophisticated definition of "phariseeism" from a textbook. [32] Georges Auriac argued that it was difficult to accept that the flame of conviction burned in the heart of every teacher from 8.15 every morning, only to be extinguished 15 minutes later. [33] The teacher was also exhorted to be an example to children in his private life, through avoiding the temptations of buying on credit, but in other areas of his professional and social roles, there were important contradictions of a rather Shavian type. The instituteur, exhorted in official texts to be a man of burning conviction in the classroom, was equally advised by the teachers' guides to be a man of diplomatic circumspection in the local community.

Attempts by leading figures in the system to reconcile these conflicting elements served only to compound them.

M. Pimienta, Inspecteur Général, writing in 1951, accepted that the twin problems of neutrality and consensus were sources of major difficulty, as was the division of teaching approaches into the deductive and the inductive. Pimienta lamented the failure of a people so naturally inclined to reason and intellect as the French to apply these qualities to moral education, but offered a solution again in terms of the causerie familière of the teacher touching the hearts of the pupils and moving them deeply - while remaining rigorously neutral, [34] so as not to offend the beliefs which might be held by parents. One aspect in particular of this neutrality aroused considerable scepticism among the members of a profession noted for their anti-clericalism, that of neutrality in religious matters, enshrined in Jules Ferry's letter and embodied in the Instructions under the heading "Duties towards God". To quote again Georges Auriac, (whose book L'Ecole Exemplaire was rapturously reviewed in the SNI journal, suggesting that his views largely echoed the dominant view within the profession), the requirement to teach pupils about these duties failed to take into account "the dominant religious sect" which represented God in France. [35]

There were continuing indications of the dissatisfaction felt with moral education in the immediate post-war period. Moral education was one of the subjects for the 1946 pedagogic conferences, which stimulated a number of articles on its failings. The Langevin/Wallon Commission took a pessimistic view of existing practice and Henri Wallon was critical of the

moralism and phariseeism which were the bane of didactic morality. The members of the Commission were divided on the possible solutions; Wallon saw the answer in terms of the 1923 approach, while others appealed variously to scouting and active methods. [36] Over the next decade, this pessimism progressively increased and in 1953 R. Hubert reiterated that moral education presented a pressing problem and that many of the profession were embarrassed, disturbed, sceptical or disillusioned with the subject but still argued that it was important to battle against scepticism and for the teacher to provide an example to the pupils in face of the children's press, the cinema and the street. [37] R. Meriaux took a more pessimistic line in a book written the same year and concluded that as currently taught the subject encountered a scepticism bordering on derision which raised the question of whether it should be included in the curriculum at all. [38]

Theodore Zeldin makes the point that the essential aim of the Third Republic in educational matters was to impose aristocratic values on the masses. [39] This may perhaps be seen as related to the desire manifest in the moral education programme to impose adult values on children. This conflicted with the appearance of child-centred philosophy in the Instructions, both in the role which they therefore demanded of the teacher, reinstated to a charismatic role, and in the practice, which tended towards the application of a ready made adult morality, based on the categorical imperative, which left the child little opportunity to relate what was taught to his own experience or

to relate moral principles to action, the latter omission being regretted by the traditionalist philosopher, Alain. [40] In the situations in which this kind of experience might have been provided, for example in the school cooperatives, the major officially endorsed innovation of the inter-war years, the general picture was one of close adult control which tended to turn these bodies into adjuncts of the caisse d'école as additional resources for fund-raising.

If moral education and its post-elementary concomitant, civic education, were designed to create the future man and citizen, other subjects in the school curriculum had the aim of making him a French citizen. The teaching of French was regarded as a major means of attaining this end. There was no question of proceeding from the known to the unknown in the matter of language and the task of the instituteur was defined in terms of the conflict between "the argot of the quarter, the patois of the village, the dialect of the province" and "the language of Racine and Voltaire". The teaching of French was seen not only in terms of the maintenance and expansion of a fine language and a fine literature but also as prime means of fortifying national unity through uniformity in usage. [41] The 1923 Instructions were totally in sympathy with the instituteur in this conflict and this attitude persisted in the post-war period, particularly in the case of Alsace-Lorraine in which provinces there had been considerable reversion to the use of German. The members of the Langevin/Wallon Commission were unanimous in their insistence on

the restoration of French in the provinces, but the problem was not confined to these specific cases and one of the members of the Commission complained that French had to be taught virtually as a second language in many parts of the country. [42]

The teaching of history and geography was intended to serve, at least in part, similar ends. The Official Instructions dismissed the choice between "scientific" and "patriotic" history as irrelevant to the case of French history, asserting that "French patriotism had nothing to fear from the truth". [43] (J.O. Grandjouan's confirmation of this outlook has already been noted in connection with the Vichy regime, but one may note in passing the irony that the Minister over whose signature the Instructions were published, Léon Bérard, was himself to gravitate into the Vichy regime during the war). The teaching of geography also had a distinctive national colouring which the author of the Instructions of 1923 had felt necessary to justify. The exclusive stress on French geography was an occasional object of criticism, but the official text justified this by pointing out that first, France was a major political and cultural force in the world and secondly that her colonies were spread across the globe; since none of these aspects could be studied without reference to surrounding countries, the geography of France became veritably the geography of the world. [44]

The aim of creating the future Frenchman and French citizen was combined with the more functional aspects of the elementary

curriculum, the provision for the teaching of the basic skills, the fundamental tools of all further progress. The most important of these was the skill of reading. While this is true of all systems of education, reading was given particular importance in the French system by certain distinctive characteristics of school organisation in France. In the preparatory course, one third of the total timetable allowance was given over to the teaching of reading, followed by about one quarter of the time available in the two years of the subsequent elementary course. (There was a small difference between timetables for boys and girls in this respect, boys having seven hours as against six and a half for girls, a distinction arising from the belief that the latter learned to read with greater ease). As a result of this intensive training pupils were expected to read with ease on entry to the middle course at age 9+. No particular methods were prescribed by the texts, in line with the general freedom afforded to teachers in choice of methods, but the vast majority of schools favoured the analytical method, the global being the preserve of a minority. In practice, however, these aims were not fulfilled and the demands of the reading programme were largely responsible for one of the chronic problems of the elementary school, the practice of repeating grades.

Promotion from class to class in French schools, in contrast to the English system of promotion by age alone or the Scottish blend of the two which allows selective promotion and retardation within defined limits, was by attainment alone. As a consequence

of this and of the demands made by the programmes, about one half of the school population fell behind by at least one year by the end of the elementary school; for a significant minority of these, the problem became a cumulative one in which initial failure was compounded by further years of repeating until some children might be four years behind the nominal class for their age. This phenomenon persisted throughout the post-war period and will crop up again in later chapters as the effect of repeating seems to have been discovered anew by each generation of critics of French education. The problem had already received research attention in the immediate post-war years and the results of one survey are given below in Table 3.

TABLE 3 GRADE REPEATING IN 12 PARIS SCHOOLS, (6 BOYS', 6 GIRLS' SCHOOLS) 1946/7. 4,663 PUPILS

Pupils in appropriate class by age;		
Preparatory course;	69.9%	
Elementary course, year 1;	46.8%	
Elementary course, year 2;	34.5%	
Middle course, year 1;	33.1%	
Middle course, year 2;	32.8%	
Upper Course.	23.6%	
One year behind at end of course;	Boys - 43%;	girls 45%.
Two years+ behind at end of course;	" - 20%;	girls 19%

Source: ZAZZO, R. (1948). L'Ecole Libératrice, 7th July, 1948 p. 454

As a result of this practice, the nominal ages of the different classes were quite unrepresentative of the reality of the children's varying progress throughout the school. (By contrast, too, grade repeating was a relatively uncommon phenomenon in the classes primaires of the lycées). This was to have a long-standing effect on both the elementary schools and the successive types of lower secondary schools developed in succeeding reform programmes, as equal access to secondary education rested on transfer at 11 for all children. In terms of the elementary school in the 1940's, these figures gave substance to the comments of Georges Prévot about the desireability of concentration on the able minority of potential secondary entrants; the effect of the above problem was to create the situation where only half the class were within the age limits defined for the entrée en sixième examination. As the problem was reiterated in succeeding years, other dimensions were added, notably through research studies which confirmed the importance of reading failure and others which pointed to the social class differences in grade repeating, but the basic problem remained, if slightly diminished in proportional terms, until the 1970's.

The teaching of the mother tongue centred on the areas of orthography and grammar, both of which were important elements in the selection examination for secondary education. The first of these concerns was represented by the dictée or dictation, the archetypal exercise of the French elementary school. This was based usually on a passage of about 120 words on which were

tested not only vocabulary and spelling but also comprehension. Each error was penalised by the loss of a mark so that ten errors lost all the marks for the exercise. Since a mark of zero was eliminatory in the CEPE and virtually so in the entrée en sixième, teachers devoted a great deal of class time to this exercise. The failings of pupils in orthography was one of the recurring topics of complaint during the whole period under study, although there were also critics of the complexities of the Estienne scheme of orthography adopted by the French academy. A proposal for the reform of orthography was submitted to the Langevin/Wallon Commission by MM. Pernot and Brumeau, [45] while the second - and last - post-war Director of Primary Education, Aristide Beslais, was keenly interested in this question and chaired during the 1950's a commission set up to consider possible reforms.

The Pernot-Brumeau proposals echoed the words of the 1945 Instructions which appeared at about the same time. Their basic purpose, like that of the official text, was not so much to innovate as to return to a simplicity - and presumably efficacy - which had been lost since the 1830's. The problem was identified by the authors as deriving from the false etymologies which had created radically falsified spellings, to resolve which they proposed a variety of simplifications. The detail of the proposed reform belongs to the wider question of the French language in itself, but these problems created particular difficulties for the elementary school in that it was on this matter that the school tended most often to be judged. The

Langevin/Wallon Commission was in favour of reform for just this reason, in that the work of the elementary school would be shortened and lightened by the provision of a framework of clearly defined rules for the teaching of spelling, a possibility denied the teacher by the inconsistencies of contemporary orthography. The elementary and the primary school as a whole were affected by a further hazard in that the 1901 tolerances in spelling were observed by the primary system - but not by the secondary. The Commission also offered a somewhat ambiguous compliment to the assiduity of the instituteurs by rejecting any system of tolerances during the transition to any reformed system - on the grounds that the zealous teacher would teach both versions.[46] In the event, the proposed reform came to nought and the later Commission under M. Beslais proceeded with its deliberations amid a storm of conflicting invective from all shades of opinion. One last point may be made, however, about the complaints of elementary pupils' incompetence in spelling, in that the whole question may be related to the conflicting expectations of the elementary school which were beginning to come into sharper focus with increasing access to secondary school. The expressed aims of the French Academy in adopting the Estienne scheme of orthography would appear to be consistent with the secondary view of the elementary school as preparing above all prospective candidates for the elite; insofar as the reigning system of orthography exemplified one academician's dictum about distinguishing "men of letters from illiterates and mere women",[47] the failures of

the majority of children were entirely consonant with the outlook of Academy and secondary system alike.

The study of grammar was also indicative of the high level of formal requirements of the elementary curriculum, this level being readily comparable with those demanded of co-linguists in Belgium and Switzerland. By comparison with his peers in the latter countries, the French pupil was expected to be at least two years ahead in attainment by the end of the elementary school, a point which was occasionally noted by teachers in border areas who saw their pupils repeat while Swiss or Belgian near - neighbours proceeded normally through their schooling. The French child was expected to tackle analysis by the age of 7, as against 10 for a child in Geneva, while the French child was introduced to the passive voice at 10, the Belgian at 12 and the Swiss at 13 years. Louis Legrand, successively teacher, primary inspector and Director of the research division of the Institut Pédagogique National, later interpreted the dominant role of grammar as deriving from the fact that it was the only component of the language which benefited from the existence of a programme as such, [48] although this might equally have served to limit ambitions had the programme been appropriately designed. In practice, however, the formal aspects of grammar dominated the active use of language, being allocated four times as much of the weekly timetable as composition.

This feature of the Official Instructions, however, was

reinforced, if changed somewhat in emphasis, by the new situation in which the elementary school functioned. The creation of uniformity of usage henceforth became less important than the demands of secondary education, in which grammar was viewed as an essential basis for the study of Latin or a modern language. This in turn was closely related to the justification for the entrée en sixième and as such shared the official approval voiced by M. Prĕvot. One of M. Prévot's colleagues, J. Lelay, reinforced his views with a strong case for the learning by heart of grammatical rules; M. Prévot elsewhere argued in favour of a commonsense approach based on what the child could learn but without suggesting that the programme or examinations went beyond this criterion. [49] This was to become one of the recurring themes of post-war educational debate, increasing in intensity as increasing access to secondary studies provided the professorate with a fuller awareness of the reality of attainment of the mass of the population of the elementary schools and every few years since, every major teachers' or union journal has run a survey of secondary expectations of the elementary.

The stress in the grammar programme already raised tensions prior to any consideration of secondary school preoccupations, in that the aims and methods of teaching grammar were in apparent conflict with the general pedagogical principles on which the Instructions were based. While the latter stressed the activity of the child and the concrete and utilitarian nature of the educational process, the former tended in the opposite direction

towards a primarily intellectual process in which the sequence of observation of a rule leading to application subordinated the use of language to the study of its nature in a synthetic, formal and mechanical sequence which showed little impression on the spoken language of the pupil. The above tensions also had a wider influence; the priority accorded to grammar and the demands of the secondary teachers who tended to characterise the work of the elementary school in terms of time wasted on history, geography and science which might be better left to the secondary, contrasted with the evidence that grammar and orthography, along with arithmetic, tended to dominate the elementary school curriculum at the expense of other subjects. The result of these contrasting views was effectively to catch the instituteurs between two fires in educational debate.

The teaching of the other basic skills, those of arithmetic, also demonstrated the internal contradictions of the Instructions, as already noted, and also produced a stress on correctness which was betrayed in the occasional stratagem of engaging pupils in the ask of copying correct work into their jotters.[50] As already noted the abstract aspects of theory were specifically rejected by the Instructions and the main emphasis was placed on teaching children to calculate rapidly and accurately, in which purpose mental arithmetic played a large part. In practice, arithmetic was essentially a matter of solving textbook problems. While this was to attract the criticism of subsequent reformers of the teaching of mathematics, it was the area of curriculum in which the results

lasted longest, long after confused fragments were all that remained of history or geography, or when orthography had become a matter of recourse to a dictionary. [51]

The remaining subjects of the curriculum were already in a distinctly ambiguous position under the conflicting pressures outlined above. While the 1945 Instructions represent the first step in a process which was to continue through the 1950's and 1960's, that of returning elementary education to the basic skills, the practical, aesthetic and physical aspects of education were still firmly part of the official prescription for the curriculum of the elementary school. In practice, however, there were many complaints of the neglect of these subjects to provide a balance to the secondary viewpoint discussed above, while these subjects, when they were taught, failed to live up to the aspirations of official theory.

The component which encapsulated many of the ideals of the official texts was the leçon de choses, a term adopted by the 1923 Instructions to replace the original Sciences Physiques et Naturelles of 1887, to illustrate better the primacy of the concrete and the rejection of inappropriate theoretical pretensions. The component was not described as a course as such but was defined in terms of pupil activity, whereby the teacher must bring the child to observe and experiment; the key expression, reiterated in the 1945 Instructions, was "faire passer les faits sous les sens". [52] This idea was taken a stage further by the 1938 Instructions, which introduced the classe - promenade for

the older classes, but from which the elementary classes could not be excluded by virtue of the composition of the rural school. Despite official optimism, however, post-war criticism pointed to the absurdity that the leçon de choses, epitome of the active and concrete, had often become a textbook lesson, teacher exposition being followed by pupil summary, in turn often exploited as a vocabulary and spelling lesson. The classe-promenade still existed in many schools in the post-war period but with some uncertainty about the precise aims of the exercise so that teachers felt the difficulty of giving an adequate structure to the observations of pupils. There were complaints that the exercise tended to tumble into a process of disparate inventorising and that in rural areas suffered the monotony of observing "the same old cow".

The history and geography taught in the elementary school suffered the same criticisms of their bookish, formal and abstract nature, a tendency recognised in successive official texts which sought to limit the content of the programmes within the modest aims of the school and to counter the tendency to abstract and essentially verbal learning. The 1945 Instructions stressed that geography proper should begin only in the middle course and should be closely related in method to the leçon de choses; the main emphasis was laid on observation of the local environment and the creation of a sense of space as represented on a map or plan. Technical terms were to be kept to minimum, although it was acknowledged that some were necessary, [53] while secondary

teachers complained about pupils' failure to understand terms like "isthmus" and "erosion". [54] The textbooks of the immediate post-war period tended to run counter to these instructions, however, beginning with the solar system and working inwards to France, from the unknown to the known. In majority practice, the main approach to the teaching of geography rested on the learning of facts and the identification of landmarks such as capes, estuaries, rivers and their tributaries. One inspector humorously lamented that he had come to the verge of retirement before any specific new programmes had appeared; having witnessed many recitations of the tributaries of the Seine on the left bank during his professional activity, he had thus been deprived of the opportunity of learning the names of the tributaries on the right bank. [55]

The 1945 Instructions also amended the history programme. Where the 1923 Instructions had divided the course into chronological stages, the division between the elementary and middle courses being made at the year 1610, with further internal subdivisions between the years of these courses, for example at 1815 for the division between CM 1 and CM 2, the 1945 Instructions required that each course should study the entire chronological range of French history. Much emphasis was placed on the importance of observation of the concrete in the form of documents, portraits and monuments, or "the most faithful and perfect representation of them". [56] In practice this seems to have progressed little further than the use of illustrated textbooks

which themselves had exemplified one view of active methods when introduced. The teaching of history was widely criticised as excessively abstract, rigidly chronological and burdened with ill-understood terminology. The pupil's attempt to explain history in terms of his own experience occasionally shows through the odd inspector's "howler" - "What did the Franks do when Clovis died? Buried him, sir." - but in general there was little in the appraisal of the teaching of history to identify with the aspirations of the official texts or the glowing faith of Grandjouan.

These two subjects were the focus of one of the few innovative essays of the immediate post-war years, in the form of the études de milieu, technically introduced for the upper classes but often involving the elementary classes as well. The aim of this exercise was partly pedagogical, in fostering active methods, but also had much wider ambitions, being seen as an attempt to create a fund of basic resource material for local studies in the form of the monographs which the teacher and his pupils would produce on the various aspects of local society. The end product of the experiment seems to have been a general disillusionment. The lack of training of teachers in the interpretation of sources of evidence was lamented, as was the tendency to treat the monograph as something for the benefit of the inspector - to show that the teacher had listened to the latter's talk at the 1946 pedagogic conference. Marc Vincent, professeur d'école normale at Châlons-sur-Marne, described how

two pupils in search of documents at the local library had been given a history of the town written in 1868 by a local citizen and marked by a high fantasy content, - to the extent of identifying individual druids by name - all of which appeared in the final monograph. Vincent also rejected the argument that the teacher could learn alongside his pupil as an abdication of any guiding role in the educational process. [57]

If history and geography came under criticism for the nature of their teaching, other subjects suffered more from lack of it, a point admitted by the official texts and taken up by several members of the Langevin/Wallon Commission. Travail manuel was regarded as the straightforward process of encouraging manual dexterity in future manual workers and had featured in the prescribed curriculum of the school since its origins. The authors of the 1923 Instructions, however, had been forced to admit that this was not regularly practised in the majority of schools, although girls' schools were generally rather better in this respect than boys' schools. [58] The Vichy regime had also tried to tackle this problem by introducing children to the use of simple tools, but the complaints of neglect continued in the post-war years. The same situation appears to have held in the aesthetic subjects. The section on music in the 1923 Instructions had begun with the assertion that "too often music is neglected in our schools"; [59] in a note to the Langevin/Wallon Commission, M. Loucheur lamented the neglect of

the subject partly due to the lack of training of teachers, a situation in which relative priority accorded to subjects received some implied official approval as the music staff at the écoles normales did not have the status of titulaires. Further indications of disparity between official theory and official practice may be read into M. Loucheur's complaint that inspection was virtually non-existent.[60] Drawing was also neglected in many elementary schools, either due to lack of training of the teacher or lack of space and adequate materials. Circumstances were slightly better in Paris in the case of both these subjects, in that Paris employed a corps of visiting specialist teachers, while some institutrices in the provinces had a special diploma in the teaching of drawing.

Physical education suffered from much the same handicaps. Again, the 1923 Instructions had carried the injunction that the timetable hours for the activity had to be observed by all teachers but repeated admonitory circulars of the 1930's and the Vichy reforms suggested that the Instructions had not been observed. Sport had also been added to the curriculum as an adjunct to physical education by the Zay reforms. In practice, none of these moves seem to have had a significant effect, for a variety of reasons. City schools generally lacked both space and facilities while rural teachers pleaded the impossibility of gymnastics in clogs, worn by many of the children. Teachers pleaded lack of training or health difficulties, while some introduced an ideological slant to the question; physical

education was associated with the Hitler Youth, or with Vichy. Inspectors could reply in the same vein, that physical education was an integral part of schooling in Socialist Sweden. [61] The Langevin/Wallon Commission agreed that this neglect, stemming from an excess of intellectualism, threatened the health, vigour and strength of the French nation but it was to be twenty years before this was generally accepted. [62]

The neglect of the minority subjects was probably due to a combination of the factors outlined individually above, in conjunction with the pressures enamating from the secondary system - although the neglect pre-dated the introduction of the entrée en sixième. Lacunae in the official provision of training and support services also suggested that the disparity between real and expressed priorities was not exclusively the responsibility of the teaching profession. The size of classes also played some part and the existence of classes of 50 pupils or more presented major difficulties in practical, aesthetic and physical education, but again the neglect of these subjects was lamented in rural areas with their declining school rolls, although peasant attitudes to physical education and sport may have played a part.

The imbalance of the elementary curriculum was to raise some of the major post-war problems of the elementary school, in the reconciliation of the conflicting criticisms of the teaching profession, at one and the same time accused of neglecting the

basic skills and of neglecting everything else but the bookish and abstract. The dominant perception of the latter problem in the post-war period was already summed up in the term which was later to become common currency, when M. Maugendre of the Langevin/ Wallon Commission used the word "surmenage" to describe the overall effect of the elementary curriculum.[63]

The entrée en sixième has been referred to on several occasions above in relation to the place of the elementary school in evolving structures and in relation to individual subjects. A full outline of the content of the examination serves to illustrate one perspective of elementary curriculum. The examination in French consisted of two parts, a dictation of about ten lines, with three questions bearing on comprehension, vocabulary and grammar respectively, followed by a compte rendu of a written text accompanied by questions designed to test the "sensibility, imagination and judgment" of the child. The arithmetic test consisted of two problems, one designed to test skills, the other to test understanding. A final mark was awarded for writing and presentation. The various tests were weighted according to the following co-efficients in the marking process; dictation - 3; questions on dictation - 4; compte rendu - 3; arithmetic - 6; writing and presentation - 1.[64]

The examination already by the late 1940's attracted a fair degree of controversy, but this centred on its use for selection purposes rather than on its effect on the elementary curriculum.

Gustave Monod, of the reform commission, who had also been the first director of secondary after the war, objected to the exam on grounds familiar to English educational debate, that it did not function as a test of aptitude but as a competitive examination to fill the places available. [65] On the other hand, Pierre Audiat, writing in Le Figaro, reflected official opinion that the test offered a measure of objectivity in the selection of candidates and ruled out extraneous factors influencing choice of pupils. [66] The focus on the study of the basics as preparation for the examination and secondary schooling also rested on occasion on a confusion of past theory as well as present practice. A contributor to L'Education Nationale during 1947 argued that the essential thing for the elementary school was to get back to its original goal of teaching the three R's, a confusion which epitomised the difficulties faced by the elementary schools in the face of secondary demands. [67]

The main teacher's union, SNI, saw the solution in rather different light, although the union's position on the question of educational values was somewhat confused by its corporatist ambitions in the post-elementary sector, so that "l'école rudimentaire" represented career implications of greater immediacy than the underlying question of educational principles. This apart, SNI was largely pre-occupied in the immediate post-war years with the unfortunate material circumstances with which many teachers had to cope and throughout the late 1940's, the union mounted a vigorous campaign against excessive class sizes,

of up to 60, and against the "school-hovels" which existed in many areas. The union journal ran a series of accounts of conditions in various schools in 1947. In the department of Meurthe-de-Moselle, children were taught in 17 year old temporary classrooms, partially destroyed by bombing, at Nancy-Villers-les Nancy, while at Fléville-devant-Nancy, 48 children occupied a small room furnished with desks dating from 1890, which was not quite what SNI had in mind when it campaigned to preserve the school of Jules Ferry.[66] In addition, the staffing problems brought about by war and the movement of population, problems which were to be exacerbated by the rapidly rising birth rate in the late 1940's, also led to dependence on temporary staff without training or defined status. All of these factors could be seen as contributing to the unsatisfactory output of the elementary schools, while in the 1950's, the intensification of the staffing problem tended to dominate both official and union attention, so that quantitative matters came to dominate perceptions of elementary school needs. This was certainly true of SNI to a large extent. On the issues of aims and curriculum, however, the union's position was much harder to determine; since its main concerns lay in its expansion into the lower secondary stage and in its perennial anti-clericalism, it is tempting to conclude that the union had no particular views on pedagogy and the central issues posed clearly for the functioning of the elementary school.

C. The influence of early progressive movements

The counterweight to the pressure for the narrowing of the elementary school curriculum to the basics as a preparation for secondary education, was the pressure for re-appraisal of the assumptions on which the whole pedagogy of the schools had been based, according to the principles of l'éducation nouvelle, which was, however, represented in France by only a few individual innovators and a small organisation. Prior to 1947, progressive influence on the elementary school had been very limited, apart from its influence on the language of the Official Instructions, and in any case, the best known of early innovators, such as Adolphe Ferrière, tended to function outside the system, dealing essentially with the children of the enlightened middle classes. Attempts to reform the system from within were much more difficult and some brief indication of the isolation of the innovator is worthwhile at this point, although the full discussion of innovatory movements will be left to a later part of the thesis.

One successful innovation dating from the inter-war years was the work of a primary inspector, Barthélemy Profit, who launched in the department of Nord the idea of the school cooperative, which encouraged pupils to take a more active part in the running of the school, thus developing those civic virtues so highly prized by the Official Instructions. Profit's innovation received official approval and dissemination, with the Ministry still encouraging the formation of cooperatives in the post-war period. Profit's success, however, may be seen

as illustrating the limits within which the innovator could work in that his movement did not challenge in any way the prevailing assumptions of the system, being on the contrary greatly appealing to the spirit of Third Republican moralism which marked other aspects of school life. In addition, this cooperation was encouraged within strictly defined limits and the cooperatives became essentially adjuncts to the fund-raising activities of the school.

Another primary inspector, Roger Cousinet, whose profoundly Rousseauian theory will be discussed more fully in Chapter V, launched experiments in group work in about twenty Paris schools from 1920 onwards, eventually encompassing about 40 schools. While Cousinet afterwards claimed encouraging results, there was little official response to his work and the innovator eventually left the state system to continue working with his own private school. More dramatic, however, was the experience of Célestin Freinet, a country teacher who introduced elements of his own educational practice, derived variously from child-centred and socialist sources, in his village school in St. Paul, (Alpes-Maritimes). His work, however, attracted hostility from parents, necessitating the intervention of the local inspector and the "affair of 1932" ended with Freinet losing his job. Freinet responded by establishing his own school in somewhat insolent proximity to the scene of his misfortunes with the system, at the neighbouring village of Vence. He also established his own organisation, L'Ecole Moderne Francaise, which has generated

various offshoots and undergone various mutations as he developed his own distinctive theory and practice of education. Even in Freinet's case, the passing of time showed a softening of official attitudes and a raising of the level of tolerance of innovation. Although interned during the war, Freinet not only had his school restored in 1945 but began to receive students in training in order to introduce them to active methods. Freinet exercised a growing influence on the system during the 1950's and 1960's, although his own experience left him with a mixture of hostility and indifference to the official system as it began to show interest in his reforms.

The main organisation devoted to l'éducation nouvelle, the Groupe Francaise de L'Education Nouvelle, GFEN, was established in 1921, as the French organ of the Ligue Internationale de L'Education Nouvelle. In the inter-war period, it contained some highly influential figures such as the psychologists Henri Wallon and Henri Piéron, Roger Gal and Gustave Monod from the team responsible for aspects of the 1937/8 Zay reforms, and leading intellectuals like Paul Langevin. If it enjoyed a certain semi-official status, its numbers remained small, with its total membership around 700-800 at the outbreak of the war, [1] although the quality of the membership may have given it more influence than its numbers suggested. It also appears to have been an urban, if not even Parisian, body and as such attracted the hostility of Célestin Freinet, who regarded it as "a Parisian head without a body". [2] Freinet himself wrote off the GFEN

as "dead and without influence" in a letter to Paul Langevin in 1945,[3] but the medium gave the lie to the message, as the letter was written to Langevin as President of a major national commission which also included a phalanx of leading members of the organisation. It would appear to be true, however, the GFEN had little membership, even within its limited numbers, from the teaching profession; it did, however, make a profound mark on the history of French educational reform through the work of the commission and the Plan which it produced; the Langevin/Wallon Plan is the subject of the chapter which follows.

In conclusion, it may be said that the elementary school in 1947 and succeeding years was already entrenched in a conflict of educational values arising from its place in changing structures, but already present in the everyday practice of the schools. To the contradictions of the Official Instructions, the practice of the schools added others in the tendency to move towards a view of the curriculum similar to that advanced by the proponents of preparation for the secondary as the prime role of the school. This in effect put the teachers in an ambiguous position; criticised for failing to attend to the wider aspects of the curriculum by one set of interests, they were also criticised for their failure to concentrate on the basic skills to the exclusion of these wider dimensions by another set of interests. Thus, if there were a gap between theory and practice, this applied not only to the Official Instructions and their excessive ambitions but also to the secondary critics of the schools. This

being so, it suggested that the malfunction of the school had deeper roots than perceived from either viewpoint, that it was not a question of how much the elementary school attempted but the nature of what it attempted. As it transpired, these questions were largely submerged by the circumstances of the schools, which demanded attention above all to its material and staffing problems during the 1950's, but this was at a time when the two schools of thought on the elementary curriculum were coming to full expression. The first followed the recommendations of the Langevin/Wallon Plan of 1947, the second arose from the fact of increasing entry to secondary education which served to illustrate more clearly the malfunctions of the school. The first of these pressures forms the subject of Chapter II.

C H A P T E R I I

THE LANGEVIN/WALLON PLAN

The impetus towards reform in the immediate post-war period arose in part from the developments outlined in the introductory section. The nature of, and demands on, the elementary school had already been altered by the growing number of access routes to secondary education and had thus given rise to a series of anomalies, on two distinct levels. First there were the anomalies of structure leading to the duplication of provision in different institutions at corresponding levels, arising from the piecemeal and uncoordinated nature of pre-war developments, intensified by the competitive outlook of the primary and secondary systems, administrative sub-units and teachers alike. These created a pressing need for rationalisation of the system, a point emphasised by the first post-war Minister, René Capitant, [1] who established the reform commission of 1944-47. Secondly, there were anomalies arising from the increasing conflict between the terms of the Official Instructions for the elementary school as a part of the primary school of 1923 and the increasingly important function of preparation for secondary education. I have suggested in the preceding chapter that this tension was more apparent than real, but the issue did establish the terms of the debate over the function of the elementary school for the next twenty years, against a background of apparent ministerial ambivalence which resulted in the retention of the 1923 texts alongside official prescription which emphasised the second aspect of the function of the elementary school.

To the process of rationalising prior developments, the immediate post-war period added a further dimension, that of democratising the

system as a central pillar of post-war social reconstruction. The Langevin/Wallon Plan of 1947 encapsulated the intense post-Liberation idealism which sought a radical reform of the system of education, but this was only the summation of a long process of deliberation by a variety of interested groups both within and outwith occupied France. Some of these groups, however, brought different perceptions of the meaning of "democratisation" to the reform process; if these differences were concealed to some extent by the dominance of the Langevin/Wallon Plan over reform thinking during the Fourth Republic as well as the loyalty expressed to the Plan by groups whose own aspirations might differ considerably in detail, they emerged again in considerable depth in the reform process culminating in the rénovation pédagogique.

One final point is worthy of mention before going on to consider the proceedings and conclusions of the Langevin/Wallon Commission; the different perceptions of reform of the educational system all focussed on the secondary stage above all. In fact, at the outset of the reform process, in a manner anticipating the later reform processes of the Fourth and Fifth Republics, the elementary school was virtually excluded, on the basis either of faint praise - such as that of the historian Marc Bloch, [2] who confessed that he knew little of the elementary school but accepted that it probably functioned best of the various units of the system - or of the assumption, common to English thinking of the period, that the crucial questions of equality only arose at the age of 11. Thus Capitant averred that equality already existed in the primary school and the

problem lay solely in extending it to the secondary.[3] On the other hand, the various approaches to the reform of the secondary school implied a variety of roles for the elementary school, which thus at the outset of post-war educational reform came to have its pedagogy defined in terms of the demands of other levels as its structure had become defined as an inference of changes elsewhere in the system.

The reform commission established by the Algiers Minister of National Education, René Capitant, was linked in personnel and spirit not only to the various reform movements of Occupied France but also to the major pre-war reform projects of the Compagnons and Jean Zay. The successive chairmen of the Commission, Paul Langevin and Henri Wallon, had both been major figures in the Groupe Française de L'Education Nouvelle since its inception, while both were influential intellectual recruits to the French Communist Party. Wallon had played a major part in the planning of educational reform within the resistance movement and had been nominated as Secretary General for National Education by the National Council of the Resistance. He had actually taken up office in the Rue de Grenelle on 20th August, 1944, in somewhat heroic circumstances with firing echoing round the city, while the building had been liberated only a matter of hours before his arrival by a resistance corps composed appropriately of instituteurs.[4] Wallon held office for only a fortnight before being replaced by Capitant from Algiers, but had set in motion some policies which were later continued by the latter, notably the restoration of the écoles normales. In addition, Wallon's team of directors, recruited alfresco in a series of clandestine meetings in the Jardin des Plantes during the last days of the occupation, also

served into the succeeding Ministry, although the tenure of two of the latter, M. Barrée of Primary Education and M. Monod of Secondary Education, was relatively brief.

The first chairman, the physicist Paul Langevin, had also been involved in wartime reform plans as the figure around whom the plans of the GFEN were focussed. A small group of members of that body had held regular meetings from 1942 onwards and had communicated the results of their deliberations to Langevin, then living under surveillance in Troyes. This group was also represented on the Commission, in the persons of Roger Gal, later to become Director of the Research Service at the National Pedagogical Institute, I.P.N., and Gustave Monod, the aforementioned member of Wallon's team. Both had been involved in the main innovation of the Zay reforms of 1938, the experimental classes nouvelles in the first two years of secondary education.

Wallon, who succeeded to the chairmanship of the Commission after the death of Langevin in December, 1946, had initially been one of two vice-chairmen; the other, the psychologist Henri Piéron, was also a leading figure in GFEN. A further GFEN member was the primary inspectrice, Fernande Seclet - Riou, who was also one of the main figures in PCF educational writing for twenty years afterwards. The other primary inspectrice, Mlle Soustre, had been head of the innovative Collège de Sévigny before the war and a close associate of Langevin during the course of it, and was also a member of GFEN. It should be noted that all these figures served on the Commission in a personal capacity, except for the six

Gal-Monod-Weiler group had met regularly from 1942 onwards and Gal had delivered the results of their deliberations to Langevin. Wallon had been instrumental in the creation of the Front National Universitaire in May 1941 and after his designation as Secretary General by the CNR, had been the instigator of the preparation of a reform project under the chairmanship of M. Prudhommeau. The PCF had also commissioned Georges Cogniot, professeur and member of the Central Committee, to draw up proposals which were submitted to the CNR on 15th March, 1944, under the title, Esquisse d'Une Politique Française. Mme Seclet-Riou later wrote that Cogniot's submission had been adopted as CNR policy, [6] although Cogniot made no such claims in his frequent reiterations of the fact that he had submitted the document. According to Henri Michel, the CNR devoted only a brief paragraph to education in their document on social policy. [7] Finally, the provisional government in Algiers had established a reform commission under the chairmanship of M. Durry; this commission published its report on 16th November, 1944, at the time of the establishment of the Langevin/Wallon Commission.

All of these initiatives shared the common emphasis of a desire for democratisation through the creation of l'école unique and all claimed associations with the 1938 Zay reforms. As already mentioned, Gal's group were directly involved with such implementation as took place while Cogniot referred to his political associations with Zay during the Popular Front. The Durry Report defined its task as taking up again the "interrupted" reforms of Zay.

The main commission also received a variety of submissions

Directors and one delegate from the Minister. In fact, one Director, /J. Bayet, as Director-General an ex officio member of the Commission, continued to attend and to contribute vigorously to meetings after his Directorate was abolished.

The remainder of the membership of the Commission drew on a relatively limited spectrum of French educational life, a point which was to be held against the Commission in its later stages, along with the criticism that no mandated representatives of such bodies as teachers' unions were included. The majority of the membership was drawn from Parisian academic circles, mainly from the Sorbonne; this may partly account for the apparent dominance of GFEN members as the organisation drew many of its members from these circles. There were two instituteurs on the Commission, the SNI Secretary-General, J.A. Sénèze, whose principle interests lay in the question of education in rural areas, and André Voguet. The Algiers Commission which had preceded the establishment of the Reform Commission provided two members, its chairman, M. Durry, and J.O. Grandjouan. All were declared to be "authentic resisters" according to the spirit of the time, (although SNI had considerable reservations about Wallon's choice of primary director, M. Barrée, whom it suspected of appointing "clericals and Vichyites" to posts in the écoles normales)[5]. On the other hand, the Commission drew upon a wide range of political and educational values.

As it drew on a variety of viewpoints within its membership, so too the Commission was the successor of a variety of lines of reform thinking during the war years. As already noted, the

from other bodies and individuals indifferent or hostile to the principle of l'école unique. Lt. Col. Vandelle of the 14th Military District wrote from Lyons advocating a system of education based on physical fitness and the exclusion of "degenerates" from the teaching profession.[8] A rural instituteur wrote to Paul Langevin on a few pages from a school notebook to plead for special consideration of the problems of the rural school.[9] Some proposals re-affirmed the values of the selective system, notably that of the National Federation of Parents of Pupils in Lycées and Collèges.[10] The latter argued that a "classe dirigeante" was necessary for social order and that the educational system should serve to retain "the traditional family continuity by which the elite is developed" by ensuring access for the sons of the said class, on condition that they had not forfeited their rights by demerit. L'école unique on the other hand offered only an over-production of intellectuals. The Federation, however, accepted the possibility of some rationalisation of post-elementary provision since the class divisions which justified the existence of the primary system had disappeared, but with the proviso that access to the elite should be as difficult as possible for those who aspired to replace the demerités from the classe dirigeante.

Other submissions raised topics which foreshadowed major problems which were to face the system in the post-war years. The teacher inmates of Stalag IA put the case for the preservation of the traditional primary filière which had given its products their own distinctive career structure - the brevet élémentaire,

concours, brevet supérieur, then école normale and the possibility of the école normale supérieure. The teachers rejected the baccalaureate as a qualification for teachers as it would only serve to attract them towards more attractive career avenues. [11] The Inspecteur D'Académie for the department of Drôme, Paul Mejean, put a similar point in somewhat ambiguous terms; rural teachers put up with rural schools because they knew nothing better - a year in a university town would be disastrous. [12]

The latter set of submissions were to have no influence on the thinking of the Commission, but are worth mentioning for two reasons. First, they did show that the widespread desire for the reform of education contained a wide range of viewpoints which encompassed the desire to retain the traditional structures - a desire evident on both sides of the primary-secondary divide - as well as the desire to create a unified system. Secondly, they help to put into perspective some of the claims later made for the first group of submissions; Gustave Monod and Georges Cogniot later laid much stress on the fact that Langevin made specific reference to their submissions in one of the early meetings of the Commission but the minutes show that at the meeting in question, Langevin listed without comment all the material which had been sent to him. [13]

The differences between the first set and the later sets of recommendations are not the only ones which matter. In addition, the proposals for l'école unique also showed important differences of emphasis, both in structures and consequently in pedagogic recommendations for the elementary school. These differences are best pursued

with reference to the final recommendations of the Langevin/Wallon Plan.[14]

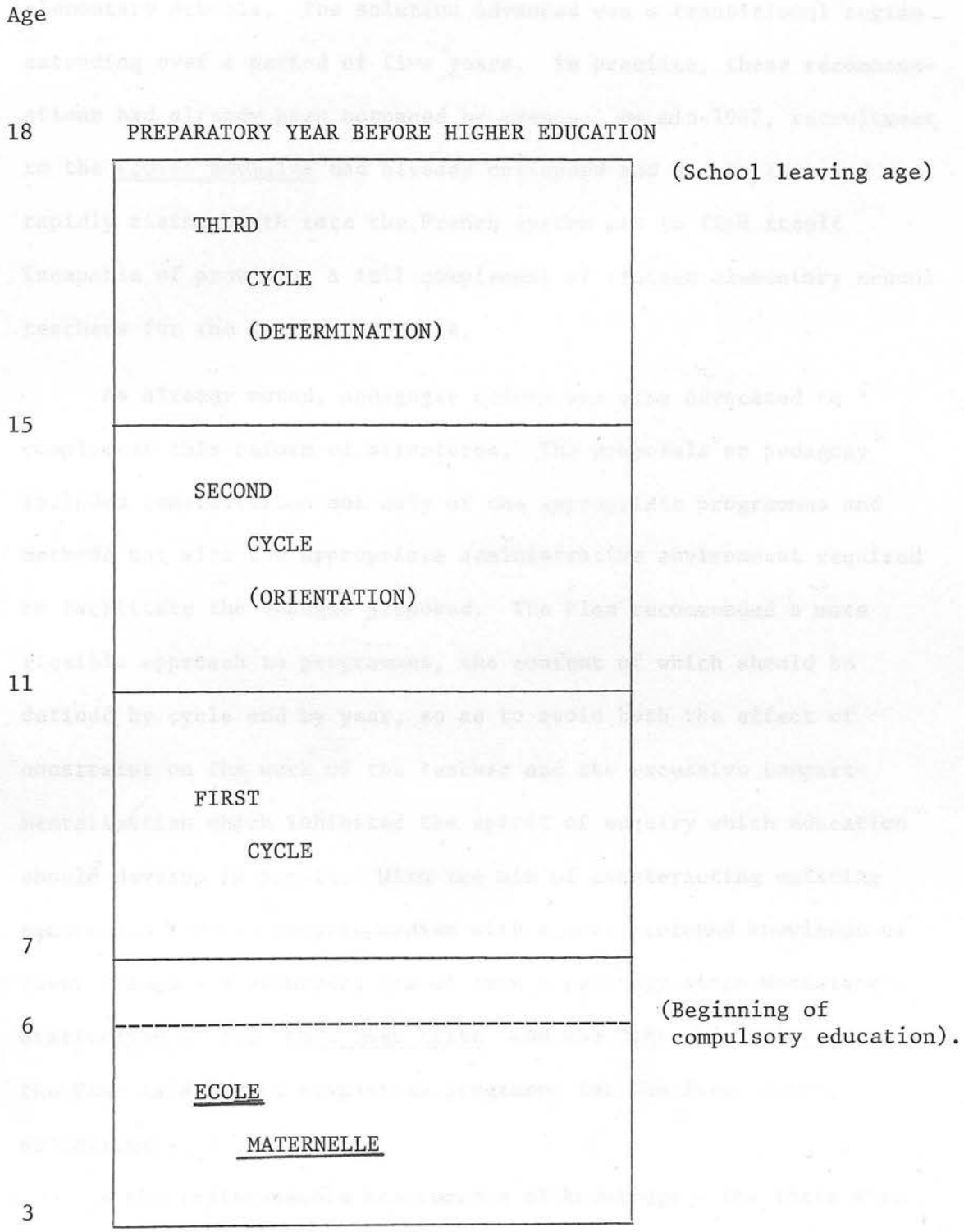
The Plan, submitted to the Minister of National Education on 12th June, 1947, recommended an audacious global reform of the French educational system. It was audacious both in the scale of the enterprise proposed, with the raising of the school leaving age to 18, and in the sharp break with all the traditional divisions of structures, pupils and teaching personnel within the system. The proposed system went far beyond the recommendations of the Compagnons or any of its wartime predecessors by opening access to the full range of secondary studies for all pupils. Along with this ultimate development of l'école unique, the Plan also proposed a renovation of pedagogy according to the principles of l'éducation nouvelle.

The Plan proposed the reorganisation of structures into three cycles. The first of these spanned the age groups of the existing nursery and elementary schools, from age 3 to age 11, although compulsory education would only take effect from the age of 6. The recommendations for the first cycle also adjusted the boundary between the two institutions by detaching the preparatory course from the elementary and attaching it to the nursery school. The principle role of the first cycle was to provide the child with the basic skills necessary to allow him to understand and be understood, and to introduce him to the study of the physical and human environment, thus permitting him, as Paul Langevin put it, "to situate himself in time and space". This stage was to be free of the pressure of an examination, these being postponed to the end of compulsory schooling at the age of 18.

While the proposals for the upper stages of the system are not the direct concern of this thesis, the recommendations had considerable implications for the future role of the elementary school and a brief outline is necessary to place the elementary school proposals in context. The second cycle, (age 11 to 15), corresponding to the first cycle secondary of later reforms, was to be a period of common studies, with continuous observation of pupil progress as the means of orientation of pupils towards different branches of study in the third cycle, that of determination, (ages 15 to 18). At the last of these levels, a differentiated curriculum would be introduced, leading to the baccalaureate. Access to both cycles would be open to all pupils at the same age, measures being proposed to suppress the practice of grade repeating in the elementary and lower secondary level. The full system is outlined in Fig. 3.

This major extension of compulsory education also entailed sweeping reforms in the recruitment and training of teachers, notably those for the staff of elementary schools. The future _instituteur_, instead of being recruited at the age of 15, would continue in secondary education to the age of 18, before going on to higher education, in which the _école normale_ was to become a kind of pre-university orientation cycle incorporating practice teaching. Thereafter the intending teacher would complete a further two years of study leading to the _licence_, only after which would come the differentiation of the different branches of the profession, henceforth to be distinguished in terms of _matières communes_ and specialised subjects rather than the traditional distinction between _professeur_ and _instituteur_.

FIGURE 3 THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LANGEVIN/WALLON COMMISSION



The Plan acknowledged the practical difficulties arising from these proposals, which if immediately implemented would have created a gap of several years with no supply of new teachers for the elementary schools. The solution advanced was a transitional regime extending over a period of five years. In practice, these recommendations had already been outpaced by events; by mid-1947, recruitment to the écoles normales had already collapsed and due to this and the rapidly rising birth rate the French system was to find itself incapable of providing a full complement of trained elementary school teachers for the next two decades.

As already noted, pedagogic reform was also advocated to complement this reform of structures. The proposals on pedagogy included consideration not only of the appropriate programmes and methods but also the appropriate administrative environment required to facilitate the changes proposed. The Plan recommended a more flexible approach to programmes, the content of which should be defined by cycle and by year, so as to avoid both the effect of constraint on the work of the teacher and the excessive compartmentalisation which inhibited the spirit of enquiry which education should develop in pupils. With the aim of counteracting existing tendencies towards encyclopaedism with a more profound knowledge of fewer things - a recurring aim of French pedagogy since Montaigne's distinction of the "tête bien faite" and the "tête bien pleine" - the Plan laid down a tripartite programme for the first cycle, as follows:-

- the indispensable instruments of knowledge - the three R's.

- those activities which encourage expression - drawing, language.

- all activities which develop the capacity for observation.

In addition, this age group was considered especially propitious for the learning of a foreign language.

The proposed timetable was equally striking in that the Plan proposed a substantial reduction in class time, from the standard 30 hours per week of the existing system to two hours per day, ten per week, for ages 7 to 9 and three hours per day for ages 9 to 11. This recommendation would appear to have been derived from practice at the Collège de Sévigny, of which Mlle Soustre had been Directrice.

On the question of methods, the recommendations were striking in their brevity. Teaching methods would have to take into account individual differences and active methods would bring into play pupil initiative through alternate group and individual activities developing different social and intellectual aptitudes. The problem of grade repeating would be tackled by the creation of sections de rattrapage in which teachers and psychologists would collaborate in helping children overcome learning difficulties without losing contact with their peers.

The support necessary to allow teachers to accomplish these ideals took two forms, one administrative, the other specialist. The Plan criticised the domination of the inspector's activities by administrative tasks and the priority accorded to the role of classifying teachers. In place of this, it was proposed that the inspector's role be transformed from that of judge to that of guide and permanent adviser on pedagogical possibilities, with a particular responsibility of keeping up to date with current developments. The specialist support has already

been mentioned above; the Plan advocated the creation of a national cadre of educational psychologists to help combat methods which were both inefficacious and fatiguing. If possible, the members of this body were to have teaching experience as well as specialist qualifications.

These recommendations for the elementary school occupied only a few pages and the laconic nature of these proposals will be considered further in the light of the proceedings of the Commission. The Plan made no recommendations in respect of specific subjects, either in terms of content or method, with the sole exception of moral education. The Plan re-affirmed the 1923 view of the subject as one which was not bound to a given timetable hour but which permeated the whole life of the school. Methods were also seen to serve this end in that the active method was presented as the basis of an education for democracy in that it developed the taste for truth, objectivity and criticality. It was recognised that in the early years of the first cycle, moral education could only be based on the acquisition of good physical and social habits and all school organisation was to be directed to that end, developing self-discipline and the taste for effort. As the pupil progressed through the school, imposed rules were to be reduced to a minimum to leave an area of increasing free choice and responsibility. In reaction against existing abstractions in moral education, all theoretical approaches were specifically excluded from the elementary stage. This part of the Plan shows a considerable degree of continuity with the principles of 1923, with the added element that moral education rested largely on the choice of methods, a characteristic of French progressive theory which will be discussed in a later chapter.

The Langevin/Wallon Plan wasadocument which far surpassed the horizons of educational reform envisaged by its predecessors, in aims as well as in its recommendations. Broadly speaking, the earlier proposals for some kind of école unique had been essentially meritocratic in conception, from the time of the Compagnons onwards. Wallon specifically rejected this aspect of the original statement of the principle of l'école unique, arguing that true democratisation rested in raising the general educational level of the population rather than in selecting an elite by fairer means. [15] The meritocratic conception also appears in most of the wartime proposals, although given added force by the disillusionment expressed over the failure of the national elites in 1940. This interpretation was basic to the Durry Report, the Cogniot Esquisse, the CNR's policy statement and the Prudhommeau Report. The Durry Report labelled the egalitarian myth of past French education "une triste dupérie", allowing "dunces" to enter the lycées while able pupils were consigned to the fields and the factories. [16] The CNR sought a veritable elite selected by merit and not by birth, [17] a principle cited verbatim by the later edition of Cogniot's Esquisse as Cogniot's Esquisse was quoted by the Prudhommeau Report. [18]

In contrast, the statement of aims of the Plan was altogether wider in scope. The Plan recognised the problems which had been created by the "uncoordinated accretions of past history" in the shaping of the existing system and the overwhelming influence of empiricism and tradition on its pedagogy, but took the terms of the question beyond those of rationalisation or better organised selection. In place of the selection of an elite by merit, the Plan started from the principles of the equal dignity of all human labour, the recognition

of equality and diversity, respect for individuality and the preservation of culture générale. Thus the Plan arrived at a statement of general aims which sought to provide for all aptitudes all the development of which they were capable, to prepare the child for professional life in which he could serve the collectivity or community and to elevate as far as possible the cultural life of the nation by raising the educational level of all future citizens.

The system proposed to attain these ends also went much further in the direction of a comprehensive system in the English sense than any of the alternative proposals. Durry proposed a system closely resembling that adopted in the 1944 Education Act in England; although Durry rejected a selection examination at age 11 in favour of a period of observation and orientation, he proposed a tripartite system of classical, technical and modern schooling, to cater for mental qualities differentiated in terms almost identical to those of the Norwood Report. In addition, each branch was to enjoy parity of esteem.[19]

The Cogniot Esquisse was somewhat ambivalent on the question of selection, rejecting an examination at the end of elementary school and allowing access to secondary studies for all, but still referring vaguely to a "tri des capacités" at some point. The existing edition of Cogniot's document does not reflect Durry's comments, which refer to Cogniot's prescription of this selection at the entry to the classe de seconde; the later edition merely refers to "a given time".[20] Similarly, Durry remarked upon Cogniot's view that some distinction between the "doués" and "insuffisants" was necessary at an earlier

stage, while the existing edition of the Esquisse uses these terms only in the context of the argument that the parents of "enfants pauvres, enfants insuffisants" from the upper classes would have to recognise the will of the nation in favouring the enfants doués regardless of social origin.[21]

The Prudhommeau Report offered a fairly stringent criticism of Durry, and the failure of the latter Commission to take into account the contribution of the work of Cogniot, but itself recommended a system based on an examination at age 11 and while recognising the principle of l'école unique, doubted whether the whole population were capable of profiting from secondary education. The function of the examination was not altogether clear as the later stages of the system were not worked out in much detail, but the Report asserted that there would be no passage to secondary school for a child lacking the basics. (The comment on Durry and Cogniot also exemplified the confused chronology arising from clandestine activity since the preamble to the Prudhommeau suggested that it pre-dated both, while the present edition of Cogniot contains references which fall outwith the period between commissioning in September, 1943, and submission to the CNR on 15th March, 1944).

The prior submission which came closest to the spirit of the final document was that of the GFEN group whose proposals were submitted over the signature of Roger Gal.[22] Gal's paper identified two aspects of reform, that of an appropriate structure and that of an appropriate culture. On the first point, Gal stressed the right for each child to proceed as far as permitted by his aptitudes as well

as for society to utilise for the common good such aptitudes as had been developed. This entailed the free provision of education, the raising of the school leaving age to 16 and the creation of a single primary school as the first step in the co-ordination of the various sectors. The cultural demands rested on the need of a democratic society for political, social and moral renewal. The humanist aspect of this culture was defined in terms almost identical to those used by Paul Langevin and reiterated in the final Plan. The intellectual aspect of culture required a basic re-thinking of the question of the traditional role of certain disciplines, which Gal regarded as illusory, seeing this as a matter of method rather than subject matter. Finally the paper argued that the basic conditions of all pedagogic renewal rested on a wider freedom allowed to teachers and a greater diversity in school life than presently permitted by central administration, which in turn necessitated the reform of the latter and the limitation of its power. (In this last respect, the GFEN paper raised issues which were the recur in the rénovation pédagogique; indeed, one may argue that the whole of the later experience revolved around the relationship between these two aspects of educational reform).

The essence of this system was summed up in the "Troyes communiqués" which had been delivered to Langevin during the Occupation. [23] (The documents in the collection of the Commission's papers do not appear to have been re-drafted for the occasion - there is a distinctly clandestine air to the typing). The Troyes materials developed the process of orientation beyond the level of a pedagogic technique into that of a prime educational principle. One of the first consequences

of this approach was the rejection by the GFEN group of any possibility of choice at age 11 and consequently Gal and his colleagues argued for a common secondary education with the transition between elementary and secondary made as flexible as possible, even to the extent of allowing for multiple transfers to secondary. These dispositions also related to a thorough - going re-appraisal of the question of methods in the elementary school, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

If the structures proposed for the system by the Langevin/Wallon Plan are markedly more ambitious than the plans of its predecessors, the question of the pedagogy of the elementary school is less clear. The recommendations of the Plan in this respect were rather brief and general, with the exception of the timetable changes, and the Plan dealt with the central question in terms with which most French educators would agree in general but which were open to wide variations in interpretation. The most obvious of these is the case of the classic formula of la méthode active, representing as it did the official definition of the status quo; even expressed in the plural as "active methods", the principle seem to have attracted a kind of formal consensus in the Commission's discussions. On the other hand, the Plan stopped short of conferring approbation on any given school of l'éducation nouvelle, such as Freinet's or Cousinet's.

The prior projects demonstrated a variety of views of elementary school curriculum and methods. Durry devoted the greatest space to this aspect and also anticipated Langevin/Wallon by proposing the detachment of the preparatory course from the elementary to the nursery

school. Durry advanced a specific aim for this process, that it would facilitate the upward spread of active methods into the elementary school by introducing those teachers with the greatest experience of active methods with those children most habituated to such pedagogy.[24] (It may be remarked that neither Durry nor Langevin/Wallon gave consideration to the possibility of the development of a firm dividing line in methods between CP and CE as existed and was to continue to exist between CP and the section des grands in the école maternelle.)

Durry was also much influenced by examples from elsewhere and expressed a desire to catch up with other countries which had proceeded further along the route towards l'école active and the examples cited included Belgium, Switzerland, USSR and more recently Great Britain and parts of the USA; the report contained an appendix by Grandjouan on pedagogic innovations in the schools of New York.[25] The link between such expressed influences and the actual recommendations, however, is not easy to establish, given the differences of approach between Soviet and American pedagogy, here grouped under the same general label. The recommendations may be most easily identified with the Belgian and Swiss examples in that they follow developments in the former systems in the direction of lightened programmes, better adapted, by reference to the sciences of education, to the ages and stages of child development. The Durry Report balanced this quest for l'école active against a reiteration of some of the traditional values, notably "the admirable traditions of care and scruple in the teaching of writing, orthography and arithmetic";[26] the renovated school would give special attention to the teaching of reading and composition as well as restoring to their proper place artistic and practical activities and physical education.

The other proposals, the GFEN one excepted, show greater reservations on the question of the renovation of pedagogy in the elementary school. Georges Cogniot, as in his outline of structures, appeared to be torn between conflicting values - or conflicting conventions of educational language - in that while he approved of l'école active, he took pains to reiterate the primordial values of "high culture" and while he sought to base education on the "joyous activity of the child", this had to be linked to "the well regulated transmission of a defined body of knowledge". Similarly, while arguing for "more animated, more direct and more concrete methods", it was necessary to maintain "the high culture and rational ideas which have always been the honour of French pedagogy". Physical education was acknowledged in his original document, according to Durry, but "the essential was always to learn to think", while in the later edition, physical education appears late and somewhat defensively to ease fears of excessively intellectual preoccupations. [27]

Prudhommeau demonstrated similar ambivalence. While the Report criticised Durry's failure to take into account Cogniot's work on the social importance of the elementary school and recorded Wallon's reservations on the work of the Algiers Commission, the recommendations themselves largely echoed the prevailing views on elementary education in a blend of the official texts in force and the growing secondary pressures. Thus the elementary school was defined as the school where the child "ce que tout individu doit connaître" in respect of language, arithmetic and practical life, a formula which effectively tailors Gréard's original dictum to the new circumstances of the school. Prudhommeau was concerned also

that the preparatory course should not be overloaded, with a maximum class size of 40, but otherwise repeated the current official expectation that the child should arrive in the elementary course able to read, write and count.

The recommendations for the cours moyen demonstrated more fully the contradictions posed by the twin influences on the Prudhommeau Report. The course, particularly in its second year, would derive its essential character from the examination at the end of it. On the other hand the child would develop more fully his personality and intellect and to this end it was necessary to avoid all bachotage directed towards the examination and to retain the use of the active method. To compound these contradictions, the teacher would concentrate throughout the course on French composition and arithmetic. [28]

The GFEN papers treated the question of elementary school pedagogy in terms much closer to the central principles of l'éducation nouvelle. The principle of orientation central to the Troyes communiqués had the aim of ensuring the individualisation of education which was in turn incompatible with the notion of a programme which specified progress at the same pace for all. Hence the GFEN papers argued for flexible and indicative rather than fixed and statutory programmes, ideas at least partially reflected in the final Plan. Such programmes would define progress in qualitative - faculties to develop - rather than quantitative terms of knowledge to acquire. The process of orientation, in addition to being more reliable than a single examination, facilitated this flexibility, allowing each child to develop his own aptitudes and affording the opportunity for pupil expression. Similarly, marks and classifications of pupils would disappear. (It may be noted that this

material, the most directly "child-centred" of all the submissions, makes least reference to the "active method".)

Against this background must also be set some evidence of disagreements within the Commission itself as well as the reservations that Henri Wallon expressed about the various initiatives in the direction of l'éducation nouvelle then current. The disagreements within the Commission tended to be muted by the agreement on the generalities of the desirability of the active method and common usage of other terms associated with l'éducation nouvelle: thus the Director-General, J. Bayet, the main defender of the traditional viewpoint, evoked the principle of éveil through the active method and in so doing anticipated the terminology of the 1969 renovation.[29] Similarly, members of the Commission generally agreed on the desirability of avoiding the transmission of pre-digested knowledge.

On the other hand, there were significant differences of opinion on the attainment of these general aims. Bayet interpreted the active method in terms of the disciplines which had always been the prime instruments of culture. Hence he treated the matter of programme reform as the central principle. The Director of Technical Education, Le Rolland, reiterated the traditional view of priorities - care in calligraphy and orthography and a pedagogy which set out to correct imagination by observation. Grandjouan agreed with the priority accorded to skills but argued that this still left an enormous margin of time during which the child could absorb "ce qu'on doit savoir", in programmes assimilated to the age of the pupil.[30]

Wallon and others took a rather different view. Wallon argued that while there was a need for a common body of ideas to be taught in the elementary school, it was the methods which had to be adapted to the pupil rather than programmes, citing Piaget on the different meanings an individual might attach to the same proposition at different stages of development. He rejected uniform and oral teaching, citing Decroly on the role of active methods in making the pupil "the artisan of his own culture". Langevin argued primarily in terms of the development of faculties through the methods appropriate to each discipline - again in terms close to those of the GFEN submissions. Piéron was in favour of widening the range of skills under consideration to include speech as the essential medium of all social contact, while he defined the role of the elementary school as teaching the child how to make use of available resources like books and dictionaries - or "learning how to learn", as it would be expressed in English pedagogical debate. Piéron and Bayet arrived at the same general conclusion from quite different directions, as each stressed the overriding importance of avoiding the tout fait at all costs. [31]

On the question of timetables, Mlle Soustre cited the achievements of the Collège de Sévigny, in whose primary classes children attained as much in two hours per day as those in the state system achieved in six. [32] This seems a fairly obvious basis for the eventual recommendations of the Plan, but the other elements are less clear. In general terms, the Plan follows the line of argument taken by Langevin, Wallon, Piéron and the GFEN group, but its

recommendations represent only a brief summary of the various positions. The sub-commission charged with the study of programmes and methods also added little to the general discussions of the early meetings. The main document discussed by this sub-commission was a report by M. Roger; the sub-commission also received Freinet's submission but noted it without comment.[33]

The Roger document started from the general position of approbation for the principles of l'éducation nouvelle - citing Rousseau, Ferrière and the Belgian Decroly as authorities - but defined the attainment of these ends in terms of the full implementation of the 1923 Instructions in practice. Thus the Roger Report treated the question of elementary school reform as essentially a technical question of implementation of existing legislation and its recommendations were largely aimed at bridging the gap between theory and practice, the former being taken as read. The report accordingly proposed a six-year cycle of elementary education in which the tendency to encyclopaedism would be tackled by the universal remedy of lightening programmes or even abolishing them as in Belgium since 1936 and Great Britain since 1945, (sic), as well as by the abolition of the CEPE and its replacement by a new kind of examination which would not require specific preparation and would thus cease to condition teaching in the way that the CEPE did. Finally, teaching would be varied according to the needs and aptitudes of the pupils and according to the conditions and locality of the school, with the employment of active methods by a teaching profession with its status and material circumstances restored.

The Roger Report, perhaps understandably, had little influence on the main trend of the Commission's thinking and it is interesting to note that the document of 1947 reflects in general terms the discussions of 1944, with little apparent development during that period. To a certain extent, this reflects the pressure of other issues, notably the question of the recruitment and training of teachers, which occupied a long-running sub-commission in addition to a major proportion of the plenary sessions. (In fact, during the whole proceedings up to the end of his term as Director of Primary Education early in 1947, M. Barrée's attentions were almost exclusively taken up with the staffing circumstances of the system.)

The pressure of other matters may be one explanation for the brevity and general nature of the Plan's recommendations for elementary school pedagogy. The disagreements mentioned above may be another. A further possibility, however, lies in the reservations expressed over l'éducation nouvelle by some of the "progressive" members of the Commission. Roger Gal, for example, based his principle of continuous orientation on his own reservations about the work of the child-centred educators; while recognising their "realism" in basing education on the individual nature of the child, he saw this in itself as leaving the field of educational activity too ill-defined and malleable, hence his adoption of orientation as a tightly structured process involving close co-operation between professeur and instituteur as well as between parent and teacher.[34]

Paul Langevin expressed a general approval for progressive methods in his introductory remarks at the outset of the Commission,

but apart from an expressed admiration for the scale of implementation in the USA, did not go into further detail.[35] Henri Wallon, on the other hand, expressed considerable reservations about the various movements then and afterwards and remained critical of the work of Freinet throughout his career. Wallon's main criticism of the various exemplars of progressive methods was that their essential character was derived more from their opposition to traditional education, which led to the phenomenon of each movement's tendency to stress one aspect of education at the expense of all others so that none convinced him of having a tenable global view of the educational process. In terms of his own adaptation of Comte's three stages of science, the dogmatic, the revolutionary and the positive, Wallon thought that most progressive educators tended to stick at the second.[36] Consequently Wallon regarded the pedagogy of Montessori as excessively concerned with the sensory at the expense of the personality, that of Freinet, while valuable in retaining the link between intellectual and artisanal activity, as tending to efface the role of the teacher at the expense of the child's learning. Wallon also criticised the role of the sciences of education, which in France tended to be rooted in the individual testing ethos inherited from Binet and Simon as regards psychology, while sociology was rooted in Durkheim's view that all was of social origin. Thus the two remained separate when Wallon himself believed that a synthesis was essential, to study the child in his environment.[37] Wallon also objected to the neglect of the social dimension in the work of Piaget. His own views were strongly influenced by the Belgian educator, Decroly, creator of the global method and of centres of interest, (as understood in the European context), but were also influenced by the work of the Soviet educator Makarenko.

This then is a further possible explanation for the somewhat general terms of the Plan's approval of l'éducation nouvelle. Yet another emerges, however, from the circumstances under which the Commission completed its work and in which the final Plan was elaborated. While the Plan itself was an ambitious if not visionary document, the discussions of the Commission were conducted in a state of clear awareness of the pressing material problems affecting the system and of the economic constraints on major educational expansion. This was as true of the main question of the structure of the system itself as it was of the specific problem of teacher recruitment. In addition, the Commission was originally established as a long term exercise - "a vast enquiry into the whole question of educational reform". Over this period of two and a half years, the successive chairmen were committed to keeping the Ministry and public opinion informed of the main lines of the Commission's thinking, Paul Langevin lodged copies of the minutes in the Musée Pédagogique for public scrutiny, while various members of the Commission toured the provinces explaining the broad lines of the proposals and sounding out reactions. In addition, the general lines of the reform were discussed at a major conference in Paris in 1946, the Congrés Européen d'Education Nouvelle, attended by 2,500 delegates from 22 countries including 12 Ministers of education.[38] Consequently, there was a widespread knowledge of the main lines of the Commission's intentions and also of the transitional arrangements which it recognised as being necessary in the light of current circumstances. This last point was highly important in that the imprimatur of Langevin/Wallon might then be claimed for educational policies which were quite at odds with the final Plan.

The members of the Commission recognised at the outset that sweeping reform would have to be a long term process and Langevin himself referred to the possibility of a special budgetary allocation on the Soviet or British model, to allow implementation in stages; J.O. Grandjouan commented that the Minister, Capitant, was thinking along these lines himself. [39] Thus the Commission discussed a number of possible transitional arrangements which did not appear in the final Plan, for example the harmonisation of programmes in the different types of sixième to allow easier transfer between the various types of post-primary education and as a useful first step towards a unified system. [40] The Ministry accepted this in principle during 1947. In the same vein, the Commission devoted considerable attention to the question of rural schools, on which J.A. Seneze contributed comprehensive proposals for reform, based on some differentiation at lower secondary level and the raising of the school leaving age to 16 compared to 18 in the final Plan. [41] (It will be recalled from page 8 that the Commission was also obliged to turn its attention to the question of sanctions for non-attendance in rural areas and was prepared to consider adjustments to the school year to take account of the periods when child labour might still be necessary.)

Similar circumstances applied to the consideration of the education and training of teachers, which is fully treated in a later chapter, but the question which best illustrates the problem is that of examinations, which was to throw some curious contradictions around the Langevin/Wallon Plan. The Commission was

divided over the question of an examination for entry to secondary education, although the Plan rejected all examinations prior to the baccalaureate at age 18. Henri Piéron dismissed the CEPE as lacking both validity and reliability, while Langevin, Gal, Monod, Seclet-Riou, Gal and Wallon himself were against such examinations in principle. Current practice added problems in that the system had not as yet been rationalised so that the elementary school pupil might have to sit any one of three possible examinations - the entrée en sixième, Part 1 of the CEPE or the concours des bourses - while candidates for secondary school might or might not have benefited from a year in the cours supérieur.

Other members of the Commission, however, were in favour of the retention of an examination to ensure possession of the basic skills by secondary entrants; this latter group included Bayet and the two instituteurs, Sénèze and Voguet. Grandjouan suggested creating a single uniform system by adopting the "British" system of tests, examination, then interview. The sub-commission on programmes and methods eventually concluded that the entrée en sixième was the most appropriate examination and represented "a necessary evil" for the time being. [42] The upshot of this was that the Ministry was able to claim that by adopting the entrée en sixième as the sole transfer examination, it had already begun to implement the Langevin/Wallon reform. [43] This in turn generated some ironic criticism of the Commission; Pierre Boyancé wrote in Le Monde criticising those within the reform movement who were "so sure of representing the authentic will of democracy that they would willingly dispense with its legal expression", by putting in place

aspects of the reform before the principle had been decided by the National Assembly. [44] Boyancé did not specify the measures to which he took exception, but the harmonisation of programmes and the rationalisation of the examination system were the only possible candidates.

All of this raises the question of the relationship of the Plan to the discussions which had preceded its publication, which in turn raises the matter of the changing environment within which the Commission completed its long deliberations. As already noted, the Commission had begun its proceedings in the wake of the Liberation, in advance of the restoration of political and administrative normality. By the end of these deliberations, however, the situation had changed considerably, with its effects on the Commission, whose initial unanimity seems to faded in step with the initial consensus of Fourth Republic politics. Events after the change in presidency of the Commission illustrate this point. Langevin died in December, 1946, at a time when the Commission was being subjected to increasing criticism, not only in respect of its main lines of thinking on reform, but also because of the delay in submitting its report - despite the original remit to treat the question as a long term one - and because the Commission carried out its task en vase clos - despite the steps taken to disseminate information about the proposed reform - in the absence of representatives from the main interest groups in the system.

In this situation, Wallon's accession to the presidency was viewed rather differently by different members of the Commission. Mme Seclet Riou later paid tribute to Wallon's skill in holding

the Commission together in the face of outside criticism and internal dissent.[45] On the other hand, Gustave Monod's reminiscences carry a slightly dismissive description of Wallon's role as the editor of an efficient summary of the main agreements of the Commission.[46] It may or may not be worthy of note that Roger Gal turned down the job of writing the final report, in the light of Monod's later comment that Langevin's death was disastrous for the Commission.[47]

The internal dissensions in the Commission arose from a variety of factors. According to Mme Seclet Riou, the political and pedagogical divisions within the Commission intensified greatly during the final months, although it is difficult to confirm or deny this judgment from the minutes. What does emerge, however, is that the Commission was sometimes drawn into the in-fighting between the different directors; one full meeting was devoted to a long dispute between the Director of Primary Education, Barrée, and the Director of Technical Education, Le Rolland, over the staffing of the latter's centres d'apprentissage with the former's instituteurs,[48] while the Commission's thoughts on the reform of the structure of directorates within the Ministry aroused a predictable opposition.[49]

The criticism from outwith largely determined the circumstances of the formulation of the final Plan. By early 1947, the members of the Commission had become acutely concerned with the relationship of the body to the regular organisms of the system, like the Conseil Supérieur, as well as to the National Assembly itself. This appears to have created a sense of urgency about publication and at the meeting of 13th February, 1947, Mme Seclet Riou was given the

task of extracting all the agreed decisions from the minutes as a basis for the final text, [50] after Gal had demurred and M. Bayet's offer to undertake the task had not been taken up, for fear of a traditionalist end-product, according to Mme Seclet Riou. [51] The sense of urgency was heightened early in April when the Minister, M. Naegelen, wrote to Wallon asking that the main lines of the Plan be submitted by 15th June at the latest, to allow the National Assembly to consider the principles and to make clear the overall structure within which decisions were being taken. [52] The production of the Plan thus proceeded through the dramatic events of May, 1947, the final document being delivered to M. Naegelen on 12th June by a small group from the Commission, led by Henri Wallon; the Minister thanked the members of the Commission for their efforts and placed the document in a drawer before pleading an urgent engagement. [53]

In these circumstances, there are a variety of ways of interpreting the nature of the Plan. If Mme Seclet Riou's task was to summarise the main agreements, the Plan may be seen as representing two related facets of the Commission's work. The broad lines of the ideal at which the Commission aimed were established in the early meetings, but there were subsequent disagreements on points of detail or practicality subsequently, on almost every aspect of the reform. The Plan may thus be seen as a summary of the general aims of the Commission, which may serve to explain, at least in part, the summary approbation of a pedagogical position in general terms which were almost the common property of a variety of pedagogical standpoints.

A second possibility arises from the Commission's perception of the nature of the task in hand. Henri Wallon approached the Plan

from the point of view of providing the basis for a *projet de loi*, a view shared by Piéron who thought that such a text would allow the National Assembly to vote on the reform in principle even if it could not be applied immediately. Henri Wallon thus stressed the necessity that the texts be as brief as possible in the light of the habit of suppressing useless articles from such *projets de loi*.[54] This approach took full account of the general practice in French educational legislation, whereby laws tend to deal only with broad generalities, leaving questions of detail to be settled by administrative decree.

This view of the Plan, however, is related to a further aspect of Wallon's thinking on the task of the Commission, that it was not primarily concerned with the formulation of an immediately applicable reform but with an ideal to which to aspire in the long term. Wallon's attitude was best summed up by one of his exhortations to a meeting of the sub-commission on teacher training, which had become bogged down in seemingly insuperable problems of teacher supply, an exhortation which might almost serve as a preface to the Plan; "*Bâtir pour l'avenir; la chimère d'aujourd'hui devenant la verité de demain*".[55] While this latter point, along with the perception of the task as the preparation of a *projet de loi*, serves adequately to explain the proposals for such ambitious reforms of structure by comparison with the practical limitations acknowledged by the Commission during its discussions, the question of pedagogy is less easy to see in this light, especially taking into account the ambivalences expressed by Wallon and others towards *l'éducation nouvelle* as currently constituted.

The reactions to the Langevin/Wallon Plan also have to be seen in the light of the above circumstances, these reactions being somewhat diffuse and varied. With the general lines of the reform being fairly well known by 1946, a variety of interested bodies had already taken up their positions before the publication of the final document, while the latter seems to have been overtaken in their concerns by the other pressing problems which were evident by 1947, so that reaction to the Plan itself was rather muted. This may also be due in part to the date of submission in that it missed the main conference season for teaching unions and other bodies. The attentions of SNI, for example, were mainly taken up with immediate problems such as the schism in the trade unions, the effects of the elementary school staffing crisis and the problems experienced by auxiliary staff among its membership, as well as the perennial concern for laïcité, to which the situation in Alsace-Lorraine represented a considerable provocation.

The reactions fell into two broad categories, the first in the form of general comment which was unanimous in pessimism about cost, if divided over the question of principle. Pierre Boyancé, who had generally been in favour of the principles of the reform, criticised the Plan on its appearance for its lack of detailed costings, citing the example of teacher education as a reform which would be enormously costly.[56] Le Pays asserted that the Plan would be catastrophic in that it would cost 200 billion francs, a sum seemingly drawn from comments made by the Minister himself. Le Pays also objected to the Plan on principle, especially what the paper regarded as the Marxist basis which started from the conception of

man as producer, the antithesis of humanism. On the other hand, Le Pays did acknowledge a need to renew methods, to adapt teaching to the psychological stages of development and encourage closer links with families. [57] Pierre Boyancé found the Plan a disappointing document, lacking in éclat for a product of "the land of Rousseau and Condorcet" and criticised the brevity of its treatment of the crucial area of secondary education, (a point which leads back to the question of defining the exact nature of the Plan). In general, Boyance felt that the Plan would occasion distinct disappointment among readers, although he seemed to modify this judgment within a few years.

The Fédération de L'Education Nationale was more favourable to the principles of reform, although it echoed the frequent comment about the lack of mandated union representatives on the Commission. FEN was as pessimistic as Le Pays and Le Monde on the question of cost and had broken with tradition by leaving the subject of reform off the agenda for the 1947 conference in recognition that the current realities lay in the Plan Monnet rather than the Plan Langevin/Wallon. [58] The weekly L'Ecole Publique also expressed support for the principles of the Plan, but doubted the ability of even the most experienced teachers to implement its recommendations in overcrowded classes in poor school buildings. [59]

The main primary school journals were less favourable to the Plan. The Journal des Instituteurs discounted the ambitions of the reform in the face of the material circumstances of the time, but also questioned the excessive juxtaposition, in its view, of traditional and progressive pedagogy, which misrepresented a reality

in which experienced teachers had the good sense to draw the best from both.[60] The Manuel Général de l'Instruction Publique was much more hostile and dismissive of the "promised land" offered by the Plan and objected to the deprecation of the schools of the Third Republic, (despite the glowing tribute paid to the achievements of the Third Republic in the preamble to the Plan). In addition, the Manuel Général offered an interesting insight into "primary" attitudes by deploring the proposal for a "stratified" system of schooling as an abstract structure for which there was no general desire and which entailed the destruction of the primary and upper primary schools, (although the primary sector had lost the latter long before Langevin/Wallon). The journal did, however, put the material question at its most succinct; as presently constituted, the system was unable to meet its obligations under existing legislation.[61]

The Manuel Général also reflected another widespread criticism of the Plan in that it put the rural school in parentheses when the rural school was the rule rather than the exception in French education. It is fair to say that the Plan offered little evidence of the long deliberations of the Commission on the problems of rural education and the transitional arrangements proposed by Sénèze only appeared as an appendix to the final document. This criticism was echoed by Roger Denux of SNI, who argued that since 23,645 of the 37,979 communes in France contained fewer than 501 inhabitants, any reform which could not be universally applied and which rejected the existence of the rural school would get no further than being committed to paper.[62] On the other hand, these views of the primacy

of rural education were to be rapidly overtaken by events; post-war population shifts had already led to the closure of many one-teacher schools in the rural areas, a process which was to gather speed during the 1950's. Nonetheless, Denux's comments on the problem of applying active methods and individualised teaching in composite classes in rural schools reflected long standing tensions in the whole question of pedagogic policy in France; as with methods, so too with subjects and the rural teacher faced much greater difficulties with subjects like art and music, in which his urban colleague had some prospect of specialist support.

Along with the general critique came the responses of the various interest groups within primary education which would be affected by the reform. SNI offered a variety of comment during the life of the Commission, if very little at the time of publication. The union pronounced itself in favour of the Langevin/Wallon reform but the union journal reflected some ambivalence about the mode of proceeding. In 1945, the union journal saw the matter of reform as one of the highest urgency and demanded that the first steps be taken within three years; [63] later, however, one finds approval for the principle of full deliberations over a long period. [64] On the other hand, there were certain aspects of SNI policy which conflicted with the Plan. The union was still strongly committed to the principle of early recruitment to the _école normale_ and vigorously opposed the post-war adoption by the Ministry of post-baccalaureate recruitment to ease the staffing shortage. SNI was also adamant that its members should be assured of a place in the first cycle

of secondary education as it might emerge from any reform.[65] These two positions were probably closely related - SNI was probably unprepared to concede early recruitment before being assured of a future in new secondary structures. The phrasing of these views, however, carried slightly unfortunate implications for the place of the elementary school in SNI's priorities, with the coining of the term école rudimentaire.[66] SNI was also unenthusiastic about the detachment from the elementary school of the preparatory course, a step which SNI felt was not based on conclusive evidence and which might weaken the basis of the lay school. On pedagogy, the only remarks called for a greater concentration still on French, Arithmetic and Observation.[67]

SNI's position provided a foretaste of the corporatist concerns which were to dominate the question of reform of education throughout the life of the Fourth Republic. The other significant union within elementary education, the Syndicat Général de l'Education Nationale, was relatively free of the corporatist perspective which dominated SNI thinking; although the majority of its members were instituteurs, it drew from all sectors of the system. SGEN devoted more space in its journal and published a resume of the main lines of the proposed reform - in October, 1946.[68] Its views on the reform were mainly directed at the key question of teacher education, possibly under the influence of SGEN's substantial membership in the new cadre in the écoles normales. Thus SGEN was also in favour of retention of the early recruitment of normaliens at troisième level, to institutions staffed from the secondary sector, preferably agrégés. On the

general question of reform, SGEN was broadly in favour. The union welcomed the generous perspectives of the Plan and accepted the risk of its being seen as utopian on the grounds that it showed the scale of reform necessary to restore the prestige of the French system. [69]

On the question of programmes and timetables, SGEN welcomed the latitude which the reform proposed for the instituteur, allowing the latter to divide his time according to the progress of the class and his own teaching method. On the question of curriculum, however, SGEN insisted that the elementary school curriculum should rest on moral education and the three R's, with a greater place in the programmes for the teaching of French. Otherwise, the union felt that the programmes should be greatly lightened. SGEN endorsed one idea which had been prominent in the work of the Commission, that of the dossier scolaire, following the pupil throughout his schooling to provide a continuous record of his progress. Finally, SGEN anticipated another recurring theme in the post-war period, in the demand for a maximum class size of 25.

SGEN also showed a greater concern in its early years for the question of the reform of pedagogy which it regarded as the essence of the reform and had already in 1945 set up a pedagogic commission responsible for the dissemination of the ideals of l'éducation nouvelle. [70] Despite the optimism surrounding its formation, this body appears to have had little influence on the thinking of members and the original belief in the need for a pedagogic renovation was effectively controverted by the results of the questionnaire on which SGEN based its response to the Plan; the instituteurs who

responded were almost unanimous in their views on the primacy of the three R's and moral education, the other subjects being consigned to the margins of elementary school activity. The teachers generally sought only the freedom to adapt their teaching to their own circumstances and considered that parents were generally content with the system as it currently operated. [71] In this evaporation of reforming zeal, one is tempted to identify a microcosm of the educational history of the Fourth Republic, apart from the satisfaction with results.

After the publication of the Plan, various groups claimed guardianship of its essential principles. Gustave Monod and his colleagues visited each new incumbent at the Ministry over the next five years and found that while each dreamed of attaching his name to a great reform project, these aspirations were rapidly defeated by the political realities of the Fourth Republic. [72] The PCF advanced a series of reform proposals over the next decade and in fact Cogniot tabled a project later in 1947, but this was never discussed by the National Assembly.

The GFEN and PCF groups also differed in their identification of the chief influences on the Plan. Monod later described Gal's communiques as furnishing what would afterwards become the basis of the Plan. [73] Mme Seclet Riou in identifying the main influences in the Plan, omitted the Gal papers and asserted that the Plan had been based on two documents, the Cogniot Esquisse and the Durry Report, [74] although Cogniot labelled the latter as it had labelled the egalitarian myth in French education - "une triste dupérie". [75]

Nor did the Ministry ignore its claims to represent the spirit of Langevin/Wallon, which was invoked to justify a variety of policies. M. Beslais, the successor to M. Barrée as Director of Primary Education, welcomed the Plan because it reduced the role of the elementary school to that of teaching the basic skills.[76] This interpretation was not seriously at odds with the letter of the Plan, but paid little heed to the long deliberations of the Commission on the practical, physical and aesthetic aspects of education, which suggests that the spirit of the brief outline of the elementary curriculum was rather different.

The primary inspector A. Fabré, writing in justification of the entrée en sixième and the BEPC as steps towards implementation of the reform, reinforced his case with a vigorous rhetoric matching anything from the PCF, GFEN or any other group; the programmes of October, 1945, originally introduced as a means of returning the elementary school "to its former simplicity and efficacy", now became the indicators of a new character in elementary education, offering themes which would enable each child to realise his own potential, through methods which lay at the heart of the school renovation. The Plan, according to Fabré, remained the essential guide for the legislator in a reform process presented as a historical inevitability.[77] The presentation of reform as exemplifying the spirit of the Plan was only one side of the question; a variety of groups, including SNI opposed subsequent Ministerial reform projects from the same standpoint of fidelity to the Plan and the whole Plan. The Ministry and its opponents, labelled "partisans of all or nothing" by Roger Gal,[78] thus established the tradition

of what Natanson and Prost regarded as the "alibi" of the Langevin/ Wallon Plan, which served to keep it at the centre of educational debate for the next quarter of a century, while serving to obviate its implementation.[79]

The pattern of these developments illustrates in a somewhat back-handed fashion the impact of the Plan in later years. Within three years of its publication Pierre Boyancé appeared to have moderated his original criticisms. In commenting on the first major Ministerial reform project of the Fourth Republic, that of Yvon Delbos, Boyancé welcomed the realistic ambitions of Delbos's "Laws" by comparison with Langevin/Wallon's "Republic".[80] By the mid-1950's, however, Boyancé was moved to complain about the growing cult which was developing around the Plan.[81]

CHAPTER III

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE PRIMARY SYSTEM

A. The background: material and political obstacles to reform.

The Langevin/Wallon Plan was never brought before the National Assembly as the basis for a global reform of the French educational system, although its inspiration was frequently invoked during the long succession of structural reforms which took the French system, over the next twenty-eight years, towards its present shape, as a horizontally structured whole, offering universal secondary education. During this process, however, the elementary school remained a peripheral question on the margins of the reform issue, so that official policy tended to be a by-product of other effects of the reform process. In addition, the elementary school was greatly affected by a number of other circumstances, the effects of which interact to a certain extent with the effects of the general reforms undertaken. During this period, the elementary school lost its place in the homogeneous system within which its programmes and ethos had been developed, as the old primary system disappeared progressively with the expansion of secondary provision, although, as already noted, these programmes remained the basis of the legislated curriculum until 1969. More important was the loss of its own distinctive cadre of teachers as the combination of secondary development, which tended to attract instituteurs as the upper levels of the primary school had done before the war, and staffing crises served to transform the character and status of the elementary teacher.

At the root of the latter development was the demographic pressure on the whole school system, arising from the rapid rise in the birth rate in the immediate post-war years, which created major problems for

the elementary school in the 1950's as it was to do for secondary and higher education during the 1960's; it may be argued that the effects on the elementary school were the more severe in that the school in any case tended to be a low priority both in reform projects and in the aspirations of the teachers' unions. In 1936, the French birth rate had been 146 per 10,000 of population, in a period of stagnant or declining population which had created a staffing surplus in the primary school system. By 1943, however, the rate had risen to 156 per 10,000 of population and continued to rise slowly until 1946, when it reached the level of 206 per 10,000. The rate rose to 212 in 1947, falling only slightly to 210 in 1948. This represented a rise in the number of births from 612,000 in 1936 to 864,000 in 1948.[1] The annual number of births fluctuated around 800,000 during the 1950's. The effect on the elementary school was to raise numbers dramatically as shown in Table 4

TABLE 4 PRIMARY EDUCATION; GROWTH OF PUPIL AND TEACHER NUMBERS

YEAR	PUPILS	TEACHERS
1935/36	4,417,000	129,000
1944/45	3,782,000	145,500
1951/51	4,488,000	150,000
1958/59	5,912,000	187,000
1959/60	6,072,000	203,000

Source: Annuaire Statistique de la France, Resumé Retrospectif, 1966

These figures include the cours complémentaires, the cours fin d'études primaires and the nursery schools. The rise in numbers in elementary

classes was from 2,582,000 in 1951/52 to 3,126,500 in 1954/55 and 4,116,000 in 1959/60. [2] The global figures, however, are a more revealing measure of the crisis, which affected the premier degré as a whole.

This process coincided with an unprecedented staffing crisis in the primary system as a whole, as the system endeavoured to overcome the dislocations of the war and to recruit teachers from the less populous age cohorts of the 1930's. By the late 1940's, before the upsurge in numbers had begun to take full effect on the schools, the scale of the problem was such as to render the recommendations of the Langevin/Wallon Plan quite inoperable. The école normale, restored as one of the first acts of the Liberation, failed to attract the proportion of candidates which it had attracted in pre-war years, while the effects of the Vichy training system have already been noted. As a result, in the immediate post-war years, the number of candidates for the écoles normales was insufficient to fill even the modest number of places available. In 1946, while 1,839 places were offered for men, only 1,525 applied and of these only 803 were accepted. The position was rather better in the case of women entrants, but although in this case there were more applicants than places, 3,375 of the former for 1,975 of the latter, again it was impossible to fill all places, only 1,564 being accepted after the concours. The situation improved somewhat by 1947 but was still so far short of meeting needs that the Director of Primary Education introduced a second concours for holders of the baccalaureate, although this was vigorously opposed by SNI. The latter avenue, however,

yielded only 106 male and 80 female entrants.[3] If recruitment improved in the 1950's, by then the capacity of the training establishments had been completely outstripped by the staffing needs of the schools.

The problem was compounded by demographic factors in the form of internal migration, population shifts from rural areas towards the Paris region, the northern departments, Lorraine, Lyon and Marseille; the population of Paris increased by 963,100 between 1946 and 1962, leaving aside natural population growth. This served to exacerbate the effects of the staffing problem and the Ministry issued in 1948 a breakdown of recruiting figures which showed the severity of the crisis in certain departments. These figures are given in Table 5.

The reasons for the problem did not lie solely in population growth and shifts. The material circumstances of the instituteurs also contributed, in that the teaching body had fallen considerably behind other occupations in terms of salary. Post-war salary increases were not a total solution either, however, since the educational demands of the concours had changed in the post-war period with the introduction of the preparation of the baccalaureate. The old primary qualification, the brevet élémentaire had thus ceased to be an adequate qualification for entry to the concours, which now required a level corresponding to the new brevet d'études du premier cycle. This in turn required access to a cours complémentaire or to a collège moderne, as the former upper primary schools had been renamed after the war. Perhaps ironically in the light of the duplication that they represented, the former were far from universally available; in 1959, on the eve of the De Gaulle-Berthoin reform which transformed them into

TABLE 5 PRE- AND POST-WAR RECRUITMENT TO THE ECOLES NORMALES IN THREE DEPARTMENTS

Department Concours	MEN Places	MEN Candidates	MEN Admitted (1)	MEN Admitted (2)	WOMEN Places	WOMEN Candidates	WOMEN Admitted (1)	WOMEN Admitted (2)
OISE 1939	16	89	16		25	116	25	
1945	7	15	5	2	7	40	7	
1946	25	6	1	2	25	31	9	14
VAR 1939	22	84	22		16	85	8	
1945	13	11	3		13	26	7	
1946	15	4	0	1	15	12	6	4
SEINE 1939	72	278	72		80	374	80	
ET 1945	48	77	39		60	142	60	
OISE 1946	120	78	36		99	138	73	

Source: L'Education Nationale, 1/12/48, p1.

collèges d'enseignement général, CEG, there were only 2,667 cours complémentaires compared to 73,668 elementary schools. [4]

The introduction of baccalaureate preparation also affected the training capacity of the system, in that the post-war regime combined this with the preservation of the école normale as a boarding establishment. This limited the capacity of the institutions as a matter of course, but compounded the problem that in practice, most establishments offered courses divided into three years of baccalaureate preparation and one year of professional training. Thus three-quarters of the already limited capacity was taken up in duplicating the work of the lycees. The preservation of early recruitment also created problems having a somewhat circular effect in that this recruitment rested heavily on the cours complémentaires, which supplied over 50% of the intake, so that increasing numbers rested on the expansion of these establishments - which was partially hindered by lack of qualified staff. SNI was very much of this viewpoint. On the other hand, provision of cours complémentaires can only have been part of the problem; it has already been noted that recruitment of women held up much better than recruitment of men during the post-war years even though there were nearly twice as many cours complémentaires in boys' schools than in girls' schools. [5]

The effects of these problems on the future of the teaching profession are discussed in the next chapter. For the present topic, the importance of these developments lies in the consequent need to rely increasingly during the 1950's on large numbers of untrained teachers, who were considered as established in

the profession after lengths of service which varied according to circumstances of time or place, from one year to five. The precise number of such recruits is a little difficult to establish in that after acquiring the status of instituteurstitularisés, or more often institutrices titularisées since this intake was predominantly feminine, such recruits disappeared from the tally of untrained teachers. In the departments of Seine and Seine-et-Oise, by the early 1960's the majority of teachers in service had been recruited other than through the écoles normales. [6] According to OECD surveys the proportion of untrained teachers in the system rose from 7% in 1955 to a peak of 15% in 1961/2, falling to 5.4% in 1964/5. While the surveys pointed out that the latter improvement concealed many such teachers established in the system, this would appear to be equally true of the former figure since the arrangements for this process had existed since 1951, prior to the period of accelerated titularisation after 1958. [7]

These problems were exacerbated by the population movements which accompanied the rise in pupil numbers, a process which affected the north and the towns in general, the suburbs of Paris in particular, while there were 15 or 20 departments in the south which enjoyed a continuous teacher surplus. [8] This generated population movements among teachers in harmony with the general trend, which added a new phrase to everyday expression in the south - "partir instituteur". [9] The population movements had a double effect, according to the nature of the area; there were increasing complaints of oversized classes in the towns, while the suppression of classes in depopulated rural areas entailed a considerable increase in the number of one-teacher

schools, (rather than re-grouping on an inter-communal basis, which created problems of transport). Finally, teacher movement within the system added a final source of pressure. Although the staffing situation received temporary relief from the return of 13,321 teachers from Algeria, [10] this was more than balanced by the effects of the expansion of secondary education, which drew qualified teachers towards the new institutions established by reform during the early years of the Fifth Republic; by the end of the 1960's, this "flight" had taken 70,000 teachers up a stage in the school system. [11]

The second set of factors which influenced policy on the elementary school arose from the way in which reform was attempted during the Fourth Republic and undertaken during the Fifth. The succession of unsuccessful reform projects which succeeded the Langevin/Wallon Plan during the Fourth Republic all encountered intense political opposition, quite apart from the problems posed by the governmental instability of the period, in which another dimension of educational policy, laïcité and the "school question" played an important part. Within the educational system, there was opposition on principle to the central question in any reform - that of an orientation cycle in the early years of secondary education. This opposition centred on the consequent diminution of the lycée, which was opposed most vigorously by the Société des Agrégés. This opposition was compounded by the corporatist claims of the teaching unions, in particular SNI's desire to gain a place for its members in any new secondary structure, a desire matched by that of the secondary teachers' unions to keep the primary teachers out.

Thus the projects which succeeded Langevin/Wallon showed a progressive diminution of ambition, with the exception of the Billères Project of 1956/7, the initial global projects of the late 1940's giving way to the later projects which tended to focus on the nodal point of all reform, the first cycle of secondary schooling, on which all attention was focussed. The projects thus tended to view the elementary school more and more in summary terms, a tendency quite in keeping with SNI's preoccupation with career opportunities in the first cycle - and also, for that matter, with the pockets of resistance in the primary world from instituteurs in rural schools anxious to keep their cours fin d'études primaires.

The effects of the influences outlined above served to shape elementary school policy well into the 1960's. The prime focus of reform on the first cycle secondary led to an increasing pressure on the elementary school to adjust its curriculum to the priorities sought by secondary teachers - and by instituteurs teaching in the cours complémentaires. The institution of a single examination for entry to post-elementary courses, in the form of the entrée en sixième, reinforced this trend, the examination being a test solely of French and Arithmetic, in contrast to the CEPE which over its two parts tested the entire range of the curriculum, down to the learning of the prescribed patriotic songs. Expansion of post-elementary entry during the 1950's and more particularly the rapid increase in secondary entry from 1959 also brought a realisation of the extent to which elementary education failed to meet in practice the aspirations of the Official Instructions, a realisation which had a profound effect

on official thinking. Thus, the question of elementary school pedagogy increasingly came to be seen as a by-product of the expansion of secondary schooling and official policy to be formulated as a response to these evident inadequacies.

The staffing crises outlines in the first part of this section also had a major influence in that they provided an apparent justification for a drop in standards being identified; the Ministry and SNI were very much in agreement on this point, that the failings identified could be remedied by dealing with the material problems facing the system. Thus the corollary of the failings identified by the secondary schools was the domination of elementary school policy by an essentially quantitative focus on the question of teacher supply and the provision of new classes to meet the growing elementary school population. Thus, during the succession of reforms culminating in the De Gaulle-Berthoin reform, the question of the elementary school was seldom posed in qualitative terms, in the need for the kind of re-appraisal sought by the Langevin/Wallon Plan. As the system of which it had formed a part began to break up under the expansion of secondary education, the elementary school was progressively stripped of its share in the distinctive ethos of that system, a tendency reinforced by the loss of its traditional modes of recruitment and finally the post of Director of Primary Education, which disappeared when the Ministry was reorganised into directorates defined by function in 1960.

The last Director of Primary Education, M. Beslais, pronounced the funeral oration for the old primary school in his farewell message

to the readers of L'Ecole Libératrice. [12] In describing "this primary school to which France owes so much", M. Beslais referred to his pleasure in finding on taking up office in 1947, "this immense team solidly organised in the structure given to it by its founders" serving a primary school which was less an institution than "un état d'esprit", based on the "high consciousness of its mission", "the repository and guardian of precious values". While in some respects, M. Beslais's panegyric was slightly premature - the cours fin d'études survived in ever diminishing numbers into the 1970's - his evocation of the ethos was already overtaken by events; the De Gaulle-Berthoin decree promulgated almost exactly a year before the publication of his message had in effect defined the "precious values" of the elementary school as "lire, écrire, compter". [13]

B. Reform projects and the evolution of official policy.

The first reform projects to appear during the Fourth Republic were fairly comprehensive in scope and expressedly took their inspiration from the Plan. The first of these projects, however, that of the Socialist Minister, Depreux, failed to gain the approval of the Conseil Supérieur de L'Education Nationale. In any case the Minister resigned shortly afterwards over the nationalisation of the mining company schools in the North-east. The project of Yvon Delbos, [1] presented to the Conseil Supérieur near the end of 1949, initiated a process which was to characterise much of the debate over reform for the next twenty years. Formulated on the basis of the Langevin/Wallon Plan, the project was vigorously opposed by SNI on the basis of loyalty

to the Plan. The Delbos Project did make important modifications to the original. The orientation cycle was reduced from 4 to 2 years, thus anticipating most later projects and the eventual achievement of the De Gaulle-Berthoin reform. It also retained early recruitment to the école normale, although it sought to tilt the balance of studies away from culture générale towards professional training.

On the question of the pedagogy of the elementary school, the project also stopped some way short of the general approbation of l'éducation nouvelle expressed in the Langevin/Wallon Plan, following much more closely the line of argument advanced in the Durry Report on the need to balance the best of traditional with the best of progressive practices. The new elementary school would be based on "a common ensemble of fundamental disciplines and on an education adapted to the local milieu, to its resources and to its history". Delbos confirmed the recommendations of the Plan on the nature of the programmes, proposing the indication of content by cycle, by period and by year, but taking account of the need to encourage initiative among teachers and the spirit of curiosity among children. His project differed mainly on the question of methods; although the timetable would be established according to the needs and possibilities of children, the methods would incorporate such aspects of the traditional as served the various cognitive and affective aims of the elementary school. The use of active methods would be aimed not solely at developing native aptitudes but at providing the child with those he did not already possess.

Delbos's proposal was succeeded by a Socialist Party proposal emanating from a group of deputies which included the former Ministers

MM. Lapie and Naegelen, (the latter the recipient of the Langevin/Wallon Plan.) [2] This project marks the beginning of the trend towards the view of the elementary school as concerned with the basic skills and little else. In a scheme which envisaged a period of elementary schooling prior to a system of partially differentiated orientation, the main emphasis for the elementary school was in the reduction of the overloaded programmes by the banning of all "encyclopaedic pre-occupations". The function of the school rested solely in the teaching of the basic skills, while developing the faculties of observation at the same time as the means of expression and action. The project acknowledged the problems posed by the excessively long school week and the widespread practice of late evening homework and stipulated that the pedagogy of the elementary school had to draw on certain psychological data. In this respect, the Socialist project once again echoed the Plan in that it proposed the reduction of the daily timetable to two or three hours of intellectual work and programmes limited to the indication of general themes. Against the initial statement of the reduction to the basics, however, the project also echoed the Durry and Langevin/Wallon Plans in its insistence that the academic work of the school be balanced by artistic and physical education, the widest appeal to initiative and creativity and opportunity for social interaction and oral expression. To attain these ends, the group advocated a class maximum of 25 pupils, which was to become the perennial pre-requisite for pedagogic reform in the eyes of reformers and teachers' unions alike.

This apparent ambivalence over educational values diminished somewhat in the next two reform projects, in which the recognition of

the wider educational values takes on the air of a passing formality against the summary prescription of the basic skills for the elementary school. (The Marie project of 1953 paid no heed to the elementary school at all.) The report of the Commission established by M. Berthoin during his first Ministry, under the chairmanship of the Recteur of the Académie of Paris, M. Sarrailh, referred to the need to provide at all stages for the intellectual, physical, civic and moral development of pupils. On the other hand, the specific recommendations for the elementary school mentioned only the basic skills. [3] This characteristic was inherited by the first Berthoin project, derived in part from the Sarrailh report, which devoted only a single line to the elementary school [4] - and in fairness attracted one line less on the elementary school in SNI's initial response. [5] The other major project of the period, that of the PCF in 1955, had an even narrower focus, insisting on the primary of language and the patient study of the native tongue as the basis for all further education. (The PCF project introduced one revolutionary proposal, the recognition of language rights in the schools in Alsace-Lorraine - in return for application of the lay laws to the provinces.) [6]

The most comprehensive of the reform proposals of the Fourth Republic was that of the Billères project, presented in 1956. [7] In place of the dominance of the secondary stage which had marked the three preceding projects, the Billères project offered a fully argued re-appraisal of the aims of the system as a whole, putting the elementary school into a clear framework of common aims within a rationalised and democratised system of education. Thus the aim of

the elementary school was to develop "physical and moral qualities, sensibility, the spirit of observation, social and civic qualities" at the same time as the "elementary mechanisms of expression and reasoning in both their abstract forms, language and arithmetic, and in their practical forms, song and drawing". This was advanced as part of the general need for the school to adapt to the modern world and to moderate its traditional concern for speculative intelligence by developing other qualities. This entailed a re-appraisal of subject matter, for example by offering a foreign language to all, possibly at the elementary stage as had been done in other countries by the audio-visual method. Similarly, a subject like geography would move away from the learning of place-names to study of the local environment. These aspects were not to be specifically included in the Projet de Loi, but were inserted in the proposal to lay the basis for subsequent textes d'application. For reasons which were not made explicit, but may reflect acknowledgement of the growing secondary concern for elementary school standards, the project was subsequently amended to add to the aims of the elementary school "to habituate correct practice of language, of reading, writing, arithmetic, drawing and music"; this amendment, however, was then withdrawn from the definitive text.[8] In addition, Billères saw a need to lighten and rationalise school textbooks and to widen the range of resources available for learning by introducing school libraries, printing presses and other audio-visual material. (It is possible that the second of these represents an acknowledgement of the work of the Freinet movement, but this was acknowledged neither by the text - it is not normal practice anyway - nor by ICEM).

The fate of the Billères project was typical of the difficulties faced by educational reform proposals during the Fourth Republic, and as the project was the most ambitious of the series, so it attracted the most vigorous pressure group opposition. In addition, while the unions and political parties of the left laid great stress on the implementation of the Plan, the Billères project which came closest to observing the scale and the principles of Langevin/Wallon met with vigorous opposition on a variety of grounds. SNI was generally favourably disposed towards the project in its earlier stages on just these grounds of fidelity to the Plan, but also in the expectation that many instituteurs would accede to the new orientation cycle. The main secondary union, SNES, was vigorously opposed on the latter grounds. [9] The Société des Agrégés demanded the reinforcement of the entrée en sixième, instead of its abolition with the creation of an orientation cycle. [10] SGEN was also favourable towards the reform, which may reflect the weight of its membership among instituteurs, but it was opposed to the series of réformettes - notably the abolition of written home exercises for elementary school pupils and the abolition of the entrée en sixième - which preceded the National Assembly vote. SGEN's opposition was expressed in terms of political tactics, that the réformettes might prejudice the National Assembly vote, but there were other aspects of SGEN criticisms which suggested that its secondary membership was not whole-heartedly in favour of the reform. [11] Finally, there was considerable opposition within official circles, in the form of the Inspecteurs Généraux, again a predominantly secondary body. [12]

The political tensions and the fate of the Billères project have already been studied in depth elsewhere.[13] Despite the failure of the reform, the elementary school still experienced significant changes in that the reforms decreed in advance of the Assembly debates, sometimes labelled the Petite Réforme, changed two major aspects of the elementary school's functioning. The abolition of the practice of setting written homework[14] reflected growing concern about the effects of the elementary school curriculum on the health of children, fuelled by increasing medical criticism of surmenage scolaire, the six hour day in school being followed by often lengthy homework extending beyond the evening meal. Pierre Chambre produced in 1955 a survey under the auspices of the Ecole des Parents, based on consultations with the parents of 5,122 children. Chambre found that 27% of the children in his sample were required to do homework after the evening meal, 57% had to work on the weekly Thursday break and 53% on Sundays. Parents were generally satisfied with the amount of homework given in the elementary school, 75% thinking that it was about enough, while 19% thought there was too much. 4% wanted more, but only 2% were in favour of abolition.[15] The measure of parental satisfaction was a trifle ambiguous, however, in that homework was often seen as a contribution to the peace of the parents rather than the education of the child, a point made several times by "M. Tranquille" in a series of articles in L'Education Nationale.[16] The abolition of homework was a crime against the authority and tranquillity of parents!

More important from Chambre's viewpoint, and unnoticed by parents in that these data were candidly given in their responses,

was the fact that children frequently suffered from a lack of proper facilities; 41% were not alone at a table, while 25% had to compete with the noise of younger children or of a radio. In addition, the figures showed a distinct disparity between the theoretical duration of the homework as set by the teacher and the actual time spent on it by the children, which cast a shadow over the general approval of teachers for the practice, (only 4% expressed themselves opposed to it), which may have rested on a different view of events. The account by Jean Lauvergnat of SNI took this teacher satisfaction into account when detailing the change in official policy, the case for the reform being phrased tactfully as a recognition of the realities of a changing life style rather than a criticism of teachers.[17]

The abolition of written homework led to timetable adjustments to allow the work normally done to be undertaken in school during the last hour of the day. (This aspect gave new life to one of SNI's old causes and the union protested that the provision for R.E. in Alsace-Lorraine blocked the reform, which thus demanded the application of the lay laws to the province).[18] The adjustments in practice affected most subjects and the revised outline of the timetable is given in Table 6. The abolition of written work did not exclude some evening work, such as revision of the day's lessons or preparation of lessons to follow. This aspect of the Petite Réforme did not occasion a great deal of comment, despite parental and teacher satisfaction with the status quo, (Chambre's findings on the former were largely confirmed by the survey conducted by FNPEEP,

TABLE 6 TIMETABLE ADJUSTMENTS: ABOLITION OF DEVOIRS DU SOIR, 1956.
(1945 time allowances in brackets)

COURSE	CE	CM
Moral Education	1 (1¼)	1 (1¼)
Reading and Language	10½ (11¼)	9 (9¾)
Writing	1 (2½)	0 (2½)
History/Geography	1 (1½)	1½ (2)
Arithmetic	3½ (3¾)	5 (5)
Observation (Leçon de choses)	1 (1)	1 (1½)
Drawing	1 (1½)	1 (1½)
Singing	1 (1¼)	1 (1¼)
Physical Education	2½ (2½)	2½ (2½)
EXERCISES	5	5
Recreations	2½	2½
TOTAL	30	30

Source: Arrêté of 23/11/56; B.O.E.N. No.42.

the Cornec Federation). There was support for the medical side of the case against devoirs du soir from M. David, the Inspecteur Général who had been closely involved in the major innovation of the decade, the lightened timetables of the experimental school at Vanves.[19] Another inspector, however, lamented the loss of "the priceless family cooperation" in elementary school work, although he did not see any significant effects on school results.[20]

The muted tenor of the response, however, may be related to the question of implementation of the reform rather than the principle. Written homework continued in many schools and the Ministry was to reiterate the original prohibition in 1958 and 1971.[21] These reminders seem to have been less than totally effective and complaints about written homework cropped up occasionally during the 1970's; in October, 1979, the editor of L'Education still found it necessary to repeat for an anxiously enquiring parent the terms of the official texts.[22]

The other part of the Petite Réforme touched on a more contentious area, that of the entrance examination for secondary education, the entrée en sixième, which had been open to a number of criticisms since its inception. The objections in principle by Gustave Monod and others of the Langevin/Wallon Commission have already been noted. Further objections arose from practical difficulties, as well as the uncertain aims of the examination - whether it was designed to select an elite for the lycée or whether it was intended to allow as many as possible to pass on to the various forms of post-elementary schooling. There were also criticisms of the effect of the examination in reducing the work of the cours moyen to a process

of cramming and rehearsal.

In addition, the examination was criticised as an unreliable means of selection. GFEN argued that the examination offered a poor prognosis of likely success in the secondary schools, since two-thirds of the entrants failed to reach the baccalaureate, while the examination discriminated against working class and rural children.[23] In this respect, the system discriminated against some such children even prior to the examination in that they might not even be presented, while _instituteurs_ were occasionally accused of encouraging the parents of their best pupils towards the _cours complémentaires_ or even the _fin d'études primaires_. (Such teacher influence may be only a part of the latter problem in that the social gulf between the rural school and the _lycée_ acted as a disincentive to parents even after the inception of an orientation cycle).[24]

The structure of the examination was also open to some question, on such grounds, for example, as that the _compte rendu_ of a piece of reading did not correlate with the marks for the other parts of the examination. The older pupils, (age 12-13), also tended to perform better; this was attributed at least in part by the greater ability of the older candidates to cope with the travel to an examination centre and the pressures of sitting an examination in an unfamiliar setting; such distortion might have had some influence on the drop-out rate in secondary school. Preparation for the examination also demonstrated weaknesses in the structure. Since the weighting given to arithmetic allowed candidates the possibility of compensating for a weak performance in French, _instituteurs_

tended to devote a great deal of time to the rehearsal of problems on the set patterns known to dominate the examination. (One proviseur de lycée reported that even altering the phrasing of the questions tended to send the failure rate up dramatically.) [25]

The teaching unions were divided on the question of the examination. SNI and SGEN both favoured the substitution of a system of orientation, although the former had some misgivings about conflict with families if this system were adopted. The secondary unions took the opposite view and the Société des Agrégés took its opposition to the tronc commun of the proposed orientation cycle into the question of elementary school organisation; the society was opposed to the existing tronc commun in CM2 and in favour of some kind of pre-orientation which would allow accelerated progress for the best pupils. [26] The Ministry was opposed to any move in this direction, however, and the occasional practice in large schools of dividing CM2 into "strong" and "weak" sections was officially forbidden. [27]

In practice, the difficulty of the examination had posed a number of problems for the Ministry, quite apart from the above questions. The tendency of examining bodies to set excessively difficult papers had provoked a circular issued in 1952 [28] which insisted that the dictée in particular be set at a level appropriate to the age group of children; it should be logically coherent, simple, clear and interesting to children, in "une langue bonne et honnête", steering clear of archaisms, modernisms and technical terms. The marking of errors was to be moderate and appropriate, avoiding the error of automatically penalising different types of mistake by the same sanction. The circular also drew attention to the type of problem

mentioned above in respect of arithmetic, the recurrence of exact calculations done of the same formulae, and proposed to avoid this by confining the arithmetic test to one operation in each question.

The question of difficulty of level came up again in the preparation of the Billères reform and then in quite dramatic shape. The 1956 examination in the departments of Seine and Seine-et-Oise provoked a national scandal, which rivalled major contemporary political problems in front-page attention. The difficulties were concentrated in the dictée and the compte rendu. The former began with the following sentences, (vocabulary questions are underlined);

> "Ma mère fut toute sa vie la douceur, l'abnégation, la raison. C'est un esprit de justesse et d'un clarté admirables. Elle eut l'art de conduire l'éducation de ses trois enfants, chacun selon son caractère et ses aptitudes sans jamais faire sentir son autorité qui ne s'exerçait que par le coeur". 29

Fernand Labigne of SGEN reported that in his own town, there were 150 zeros in 420 candidates, while one girl distinguished herself by knowing the meaning of abnégation. The compte rendu provoked similar reactions; it was based on a passage from André Gide which seems to have been incomprehensible to the vast mass of candidates. [30] (John Ardagh cites the latter as generally illustrative of the standards demanded in the entrée en sixième but without drawing attention to the special circumstances of the 1956 paper in these two departments.) [31]

The result of the affair was a huge outcry from the teachers' unions and parents' organisations over the "agrégation de 6è" as it was labelled by SGEN. [32] The Ministry was obliged to arrange a second sitting of the examination in September since 40% of all

candidates had scored the eliminatory mark of zero on the dictée, Billères himself taking personal control of the subjects for the examination. There were some dissenting voices, although these tended to be somewhat contradictory. Pierre Boyancé of Le Monde accepted that the second session represented a victory for good sense over the principle of setting dictée passages "riddled with traps" and "inopportune questions on badly chosen reading" but hoped that the Ministry was not setting a precedent for the future.[33] Boyancé also argued for the principle of selection and the recognition that certain attainments might be expected of entrants to lycées and collèges so as to avoid the problem of having at least 50% of each intake fail to reach the baccalaureate. On the same day in the same newspaper, M. Poirot-Delpêche started from similar assumptions but interpreted the situation rather differently to reach opposite conclusions. Poirot-Delpêche pointed out that many parents and professeurs had considered the questions well chosen in the light of fears of a general drop in educational standards and queried whether it was unreasonable to expect secondary entrants to understand words like "persévérance" or "déception", (which had presented the same problems in the compte rendu as had "abnégation" in the dictée), when they were virtually being offered a place in higher education. Poirot-Delpêche, however, reached a conclusion entirely in harmony with trends in Ministry thinking, that such events as had occurred reduced selection at 11 to an absurdity and pointed up the need for an orientation cycle.[34]

The most interesting footnote to the whole affair, however, came

in Le Monde only a week or two later; the Directeur des Services D'Enseignment, M. Piobetta, interviewed about the affair of the examination, expressed the hope that the recent events would contribute to the suppression of the undesirable entrée en sixième examination.[35]

The examination was suppressed by an arrêté promulgated on the same day as the one abolishing homework.[36] In its place, the Ministry specified a new system based on the classification of pupils by their instituteur in charge of CM2. Pupils were to be classified into four categories, tres bons, bons, moyens, médiocres; those classified moyen or better could proceed to the sixième without examination, a departmental commission being responsible for drawing up the list of accepted candidates. An examination was retained for use in cases of dispute and also for pupils from private schools.

Reactions to abolition in practice varied within each sector of the teaching body. Some instituteurs favoured the opportunity to break away from the need to prepare for the examination in ways which tended to reduce the teaching of French to the process of practice runs in interpretation passages but there was also some apprehension about the courage which might be required to deal with differences of opinion with parents. Such problems were feared particularly in the case of young untrained replacement teachers, making decisions in a one-teacher village school without the support or advice of more experienced colleagues. One rural teacher argued that teachers should be issued with firearms licences for the day when the médiocres learned their fate.[37] On the other hand, both

SNI and SGEN were firmly in favour of the reform and took vigorous steps to keep their members informed of the demands of the new system.

Secondary reaction was much more hostile. A. Davèsne presented the view of the lycée professorate as being against abolition, not on the grounds that a selection examination was desirable in itself, but that some means was necessary of ensuring that secondary entrants possessed the basic skills. Davèsne expressed reservations about the judgment of the elementary school teachers and cited past examples of disparities between these and examination results.[38] The Société des Agrégés on the other hand regarded the reform as essentially a trivial matter given the threat posed by the full project;[39] in any case, the Society's consistent opposition to a common cours moyen programme would appear to have made the actual examination marginal to its concerns.

Opinion at the time was also much less important than the varied perceptions of the effects of the reform over the next few years. Where the passing of the examination was lamented, it tended to be regretted less in its own right than to serve as a peg on which to hang the general secondary view that standards in the elementary schools were falling, a view which was to have increasing influence on official policy. Alternatively, the abolition of the examination gave little satisfaction to progressive circles, in which it was sometimes argued that instead of one examination, there were now seven or eight spread throughout cours moyen. The inspector Robert Gloton, also a leading figure in GFEN, judged the

new system to be, if anything, worse, in that the new procedure lacked such guarantees of objectivity as the examination had possessed. [40]

There were some areas of agreement in the discussion of the problems of the elementary school, the most notable being in the general acceptance that the programmes were overloaded and their ambitions excessive. The solution, however, was not generally agreed since the root of the problem was seen differently by different groups within the system. One interpretation was simply that the elementary school tried to do too much instead of concentrating on the basic skills, but within the same framework of assumptions as represented by the Official Instructions for the teaching of French and arithmetic. The opposing view was that the question was not merely a quantitative one, of too much content, but that the poor results of the elementary school rested on the inadequacy of the adaptation of its pedagogy to the age group of children; in short, this view held that the school failed the children as much as that the children failed in school. These two aspects of the debate on elementary school curriculum have already been noted in Chapter I and the instituteurs seem to have been firmly caught between the two; either they were criticised for insufficient attention to the three R's or they were criticised for ignoring everything but the basics. The latter view, however, was less influential in official circles than the former, which was not only sustained by the reactions of secondary teachers to the standards of attainment of the elementary school, but was given additional plausibility by the knowledge that the schools had become during the 1950's increasingly dependent on unqualified teachers.

Thus while there was general agreement on the problem of overloading of the curriculum, there was little common ground on interpretation. The secondary schools tended towards the view that the elementary schools wasted time and effort anticipating much of what would be done later in the secondary. Against this view was ranged the increasing weight of research evidence which demonstrated the tenuous nature of some of the prevailing assumptions about pedagogy and the increasing criticisms from the medical profession of a school regime which was excessively sedentary and fatiguing to the extent of being counter-productive. Proponents of the secondary viewpoint seemed reluctant to accept this evidence - Jean Château, the successor to Alain as the chief exponent of traditional educational values, dismissed it as the revenge of village doctors for their failure in the concours d'école normale.[41]

The medical criticism underpinned the main innovative exercise of the 1950's. In 1948, under the impulsion of the Inspecteur Général, M. David, and one Dr. Fourestier, the Ecole de Gambetta in Vanves initiated the first experiment with a reduced timetable for the elementary classes, with homework forbidden. Fourestier, in studies conducted from 1941 onwards, had reached the conclusion that fully 80% of children in Paris and its suburbs suffered from some kind of physiological malfunction, while 60% were unhappy with school[42] The experiment at Vanves derived from this work, with the support of M. David, then Director of Educational Services for the Department of the Seine, and G. Roux, Director for Youth and Sport, initially applied to the upper classes in the year prior to their

CEPE and was extended to CM 2 in 1951, for a further three years. The results were highly favourable, both in the physiological and academic spheres and press and parental reaction was favourable, while the experiment attracted attention on the national level, mainly through a conference of the Academy of Medicine which lent its support to the new formula.

It will be immediately obvious that the formula adopted at Vanves and labelled the mi-temps closely mirrors the recommendations of the Langevin/Wallon Plan in the matter of timetabling, being very close also to the system of the Collège de Sévigny. Despite this similarity, none of the literature on the Vanves experiment refers to the Plan, nor did Dr Fourestier communicate the results of his research to the Commission. Despite this absence of acknowledged links between the two, the mi-temps experiment represents the only long term implementation of a final recommendation of the Plan, virtually from the time of its publication, if one excepts the classes nouvelles in secondary, (which were more a revival of a Zay initiative), and expedients like the entrée en sixième.

The aims of the Vanves experiment were expressed by Fourestier in terms of restoring the balance between physical and sporting activity on the one hand and intellectual activity on the other, to offer the child a more active and more agreeable school life by facilitating his growth so as to give him better health without detracting from his intellectual development or his acquisition of knowledge. Fourestier justified these aims in terms of the formula of "mens sana in corpore sano", rivalling in reference to a classical

model, the intellectualist view of classical culture which had traditionally dominated French schooling. [43]

The Vanves experiment led to few comparable initiatives during the 1950's and seems to have stimulated little official reaction. The original experiment was followed by only two others, at Tours and Montauban, which received only cursory notices in L'Education Nationale. The main growth emanated from one specific off-shoot of the Vanves experiment, the classe de neige, which carried the idea of the mi-temps a stage further. Pupils were given the opportunity of a stay in a mountain resort, where they combined school work with tuition in skiing. Once again results were strikingly positive once teachers and pupils had accustomed themselves to the new regime. The growth of the classes de neiges was rapid and striking; by 1955, the number of Parisian children departing for such sojourns had risen to 2,000 as against 680 the previous year. In 1960, the total reached 12,000 and the idea had gone beyond the boundaries of the elementary school, various companies including Renault sending apprentices for sojourns in mountain villages, while the idea even penetrated into the academic branch of secondary education in the form of the Paris lycée of Louis-le-Grand. [44] The costs of the elementary school programmes were shared between the Directorate of Youth and Sport and the parents of the children. The enthusiasm of the latter made the departures from the Gare de Lyon something of an annual event. While in its early years, this innovation had little influence in calling into question the established school routine for the rest of the session, it attracted few criticisms and generally positive interest.

The PCF seems to have been something of an exception to the latter and was more concerned that the material failings of the school system served "to murder the little Mozarts and Descartes's" in French schools and observed rather sourly that there was no corresponding initiative to bring children from mountain villages to spend a fortnight in St. Ouen.[45]

In general, however, it was the secondary view which dominated the educational press on the elementary school. Jean Mousel of SGEN expressed a fairly typical secondary view when he criticised the textbooks of his own children and expressed outrage at the history and geography books "abounding in useless ideas, badly presented and totally beyond young minds". According to Mousel, the child must come to the sixième able to read, write and perform the four operations, so as to relieve the secondary teachers of the job of the elementary.[46] M. Sénégat of the Société des Agrégés specified further the essential basis for secondary education in detailing his organisation's views on the appropriate content for the pre-orientation demanded in CM2 - "more orthography, more analysis, more arithmetic".[47] (By contrast, the Secretary of the main secondary teachers' union, SNES, writing at about the same time, expressed general satisfaction with the products of the elementary school).[48]

These views were contested on a variety of grounds. Taking the issue of standards alone, Denys Fourestier, Secretary-General of SNI, defended his members against the charge of falling standards by challenging the assumption that all basic skills could be considered as definitively established in the elementary school and arguing that

the secondary schools had a responsibility for continuing reinforcement of these skills.[49] (This view was to be highly controversial when taken up by the Ministry in the 1970's). SNI, and other groups like the PCF, tended to interpret the problem as arising from the quantitative matter of teacher supply and the reliance on untrained recruits. This was seen as especially pressing in rural schools, where the new entrant had to learn on the job, without the benefit of support beyond the brief annual inspection and the conférence pédagogique, although it was equally common in urban schools to allocate newcomers, trained or not, to the cours préparatoire, which by virtue of its official role played a critical part in the question of redoublements.

The pedagogy of the elementary school also came under increasing criticism from those who shared at least some of the views of secondary teachers on the question of results but offered a totally different set of solutions from either the professeurs demanding a return to the basics or SNI demanding recruitment only of qualified teachers. An increasing body of research evidence supported the view that the basic assumptions on which the pedagogy of the schools was based required re-appraisal. Roger Gal, the Director of the Research Service of IPN, produced research findings which bore out much of Jean Mousel's complaint. Gal found that the vocabulary of the history textbooks for the cours moyen was little understood by children of age 10+, a point acknowledged by many elementary teachers who thought that the subject should be postponed to a later stage. Such abstractions as "proclamation of a republic" and "succession" were understood by only 50% of Gal's sample, while only about 35% understood "provisional government" and "majority of an assembly". The figures fell to 25% for "democracy"

and to 7% for "hereditary power".[50] Gal's proposed solution was not the abandonment of the teaching of history but a change in perspective away from political history, (or what one pupil described to his teacher as the "book of wars"), to social history dealing with aspects of past life comprehensible to children, thus avoiding the rapid leap from the concrete to the abstract in existing programmes. Paradoxically, this characteristic aspect of the existing programme was not seen as a problem by all; the dominant school of pedagogical thought in the secondary sector, represented by Alain and Jean Château, argued that it was unnecessary for the child to understand what he learned and that training of the memory took first place.

The secondary view, shared at least by part of the elementary school teaching force, that greater concentration on the basics would ensure adequate results was also contested on the grounds that the programmes for language and arithmetic also required re-appraisal rather than reinforcement. Roger Gal and Louis Legrand pointed to evidence from neighbouring countries to counter what they regarded as a simplistic stress on the basics. French children were two or three years ahead of children in other countries, both in French, where comparisons could be made, and in arithmetic. Thus the child a year or even two years behind his age group on reaching CM2 might have achieved as much as his peers in neighbouring countries who had enjoyed uninterrupted progress. The learning of reading, as already noted, was critical to this process, since one-quarter of all pupils had to repeat the cours préparatoire; nor did the pressure ease thereafter and about 50% of children had lost ground by the time of CM2. While grade repeating continued at this level throughout

the 1950's and 1960's and into the 1970's, the *petites classes* of the *lycées* were virtually exempt from this problem, with grade repeating figures rising from 0.25% in CP to 3.0% in CM2. [51] The survival of these classes, officially abolished in 1945, had been assured by the demographic crisis described in the opening section, and they were sometimes defended on the grounds that they represented the only assured mode of normal presentation at 11 for secondary education, with or without examination.

The progressive criticisms of the existing Programmes and Instructions thus rested not on the difficulties of the moment or the distractions of modern life evoked by SNI and Jean Château respectively but sought to renovate the curriculum of the schools to take account of the needs and capacities of children. An increasing amount of evidence from research in the 1950's also called into question the prevalent assumptions about the role of the various aspects of language and arithmetic as a preparation for secondary education. Michel Glatigny, *Professeur Agrégé*, of the *lycée* of Douai, examined the validity of test performance in grammar as a prognosis of performance in Latin and found that while all the notions necessary for the study of Latin appeared to have been learned by secondary entrants - and he paid tribute to the work of the *instituteurs* in this respect - few of these had been assimilated properly. Only in the cases of the very best entrants was there evidence of success in Latin corresponding to performance in grammar. The entrant of "average" performance in grammar might or might not succeed in the subsequent study of Latin. [52]

Other studies revealed corresponding lacunae in the grasp of arithmetical skills. While pupils tended to show the ability to undertake the various operations, this ability tended towards the mechanical, with little evidence of understanding. This mirrored earlier complaints about arithmetic performance in the entrée en sixième, in which changing the format of the problems had had the effect on occasion of increasing the failure rate. Robert Gloton of GFEN argued that such an approach to teaching arithmetic was neither of value for secondary education nor for everyday living which did not present people with familiar problems requiring stereotyped and immutable responses and that the study of arithmetic as then constituted was of little or no educational value. [53]

As the instituteurs were caught between two conflicting criticisms of their work, so too the Ministry found itself increasingly caught between two schools of thought on the question of elementary school policy. The influence of the secondary schools clearly had a greater effect on official policy as criticisms intensified in step with widening access to secondary education but the climax of these criticisms, resulting in the clearest official statement of retrenchment in elementary curriculum in the post-war period, and the abandonment of the wider aims of the old primary school system coincided with the first acknowledgment in official policy of the Vanves experiment.

The period from the abolition of the entrée en sixième to the promulgation of the De Gaulle-Berthoin decree which finally established an orientation cycle was marked by an increasing intensity in the

whole debate on standards, which reached its highest pitch in the year following the latter reforms, as the professorate of the secondary schools were brought into contact with an unprecedented proportion of elementary school leavers, reaching in the Paris region about 50% of all pupils from CM2, [54] a development which brought out fully the disparity between aspirations and achievement in the elementary school. This also coincided with the arrival of the populous cohorts of the post-war birth boom in the secondary schools, generating a corresponding staffing crisis to the one already experienced in the elementary school. This in turn had a further effect on the elementary school by intensifying the "flight" of instituteurs towards the upper levels.

Complaints had intensified since the abolition of the entrée en sixième in 1956, while the new system of selection attracted varying reactions. The Armand Federation, hitherto a totally secondary body, but shortly to expand into elementary schools, found that only 30% of its constituent organisations were in favour of retaining the new system, while 44% expressed a desire to return to the examination; 15% expressed no opinion. [55] The primary federation, the Cornec, stressed the wastage which persisted under the new system, through the non-presentation of "good" pupils for entry to the sixième - according to the federation, 20% of CM2 pupils within this category were not presented. [56] The secondary teachers, on the other hand, were quick to accuse the primary teachers of seeking to retain their best pupils for the cours complémentaires.

The reaction of the teaching body brought the question to crisis proportions in the wake of the 1958 rentrée and the following session served only to intensify already hostile criticism of the products of the elementary schools. The matter received direct Ministerial attention as one of the first acts of the first Minister of National Education in the Fifth Republic. M. Berthoin called a press conference on 6th January, 1959, [57] to discuss the results of surveys conducted into standards of attainment of lycée entrants. A survey of 800 pupils in Paris found that over 40% of the pupils in classical sections failed to reach half marks in orthography and in composition; 13% of the total entry were unable to proceed to the cinquième and 6% were judged unfit to continue "long" secondary studies. In the modern sections, the respective figures were 35%, 26%, 16% and 11%. A wider study, involving 1,500 pupils across several académies, found that 65% of pupils in classical sections and 67% of pupils in modern sections failed to reach half marks in orthography, while in the two categories, 29% and 41% respectively scored zero. In the classical sections, 38% of pupils failed to score half marks in grammar, as against 65% in modern sections.

These findings generated a mixture of surprise and anger and led to a long and bitter debate in both the pedagogic and the daily press on the question of responsibility for this state of affairs. A contributor to L'Education Nationale summed up the whole thrust of the argument - "C'est la faute au primaire". [58] The positions of the various protagonists in the debate are fairly familiar from earlier examples, but what was most important was the attitude of the Ministry. As the debate continued into 1960, the first apparent

effect was to engender a mood of retrenchment and an official desire to resolve the problem by concentration on the basic skills. This was the central theme of the "Lebettre circular" of 19th October, 1960; [59] issued over the signature of M. Lebettre, Director of Pedagogy, in contrast to the normal anonymous, juridical style of presentation, the circular gained for the Director a degree of personal identification usually associated only with Ministerial reform projects.

The circular was quite unequivocal in its identification of the roots of the malaise in the adoption of l'éducation nouvelle by teachers lacking the training and experience for new methods and in the excessive ambitions of the elementary school curriculum. Thus the document recommended a return to the proven methods of the elementary school and to a concentration on the basic skills; the fixing of the programme concepts in the memory could only be attained by frequent repetitions and numerous exercises and the circular rehabilitated the role of the memory in elementary education on the grounds that "there is no doubt that for young children, the par coeur is the most authentic and the most durable form of knowledge". There was some acknowledgment of other possible contributory circumstances in the crisis, the influx of untrained staff, class sizes, the opening of access to secondary schools and possibly even what the circular labelled "the general tendency of the age towards the superficial". While it also acknowledged that research was necessary to identify the precise causes, it offered a solution for an immediate crisis - a return to the basics and to traditional methods. On the former point, however, there was a certain

ambiguity; while more time was to be spent on the basics, the circular stopped short of any modification of the official timetable, specifying only that teachers might give up some of the time allocated to history and geography.

Reactions to the circular were varied, reflecting closely the varied interpretations of the problem. While secondary opinion was favourable, secondary teachers seem to have found that the circular in itself did not greatly influence the situation in practice and complaints about standards reverberated on into the 1960's. At times, it seemed that all the failings of the system were laid at the door of the elementary schools; two science professors from the Sorbonne, MM. Robert and Zamansky, in a letter to Le Monde in 1960, [60] lamented the insufficiency of grammatical knowledge of many students and their inability to express thought in a clear and precise form, the responsibility for which the professors placed firmly on the elementary school, which should guarantee the acquisition of "perfect" basic skills in reading, analysis and orthography in particular. For some years afterwards, the secondary parents' organisations continued to lament the decline in standards of secondary entrants and in 1964 78% of the member associations of the Armand federation cited the "effacement" of the elementary school as a principal reason; 50% apportioned some of the blame to the failure to train the memory from the earliest years. [61]

"Primary" response was more delicately shaded and more ambivalent. SNI had little to criticise in the main stress of the circular, [62] which agreed in any case with the prevailing view in

the union of the desirable priorities in the elementary curriculum, while the analysis of the problem was in line with some of the union's syndical priorities, notably in the question of untrained staff and class sizes. (One must also bear in mind that SNI included instituteurs from the cours complémentaires, transformed into collèges d'enseignement général by the Berthoin reform.)

SGEN was less convinced that the Lebettre circular had arrived at the best solution.[63] SGEN gave the stress on the basics a qualified welcome, which acknowledged the views of its secondary membership, but doubted whether the "par coeur" represented the most authentic form of knowledge. The views of SGEN were already moving towards recognition of the need for a total re-appraisal of the bases of the elementary school curriculum and the union's conference of the following year called for a "renouvellement pédagogique",[64] (thus almost anticipating the terminology of 1969,) rather than a return to a dubious past. The Catholic, (state school), teachers' weekly, La Vie Enseignante, also doubted the wisdom of the circular in opening up further old conflicts within the system and regretted and return of the teacher's role to that of "répétiteur de mécanisme". In addition, the inculpation of l'éducation nouvelle was received with some amusement by the journal on the grounds that such approaches were difficult to find in practice.[65]

The same point was made by Louis Legrand writing in the Freinet monthly, Techniques de Vie. Legrand doubted the wisdom of blaming the known drop in attainments on methods which were little known within the system. Legrand also asserted that while it was possible to ensure that by CM2 80% of pupils would have mastered tables or lecture courante, this did not hold for other parts of the grammar

and arithmetic programmes, or for orthography; the problem rested not on the widespread adoption of new methods but on the misunderstanding and misapplication of the traditional. [66] Louis Lefèbrve, professeur d'école normale and later, like Legrand, a primary inspector, echoed these views, [67] as did Freinet himself, who poured scorn on the whole approach of the traditional school. [68] The opposite position was taken by Jean Château, that memorisation was at the core of all subsequent activity and all culture - although he was forced into a defensive and somewhat tautologous deprecation of "mere cramming" [69] Finally, on the question of the durability to which the circular devoted attention, the inspector André Godier added an interesting footnote by testing some pupils before the end of CM2 and again at the start of their career in the sixième and finding that the long summer vacation saw a noticeable fall in performance. [70]

The critics of the circular were still in a minority, however, and long-standing organs of primary opinion such as the Journal des Instituteurs generally shared the views reflected in the document. On the other hand, there was another dimension to the whole affair which demonstrated that official opinion was by no means as clear cut in its perception of the problem or its solution as the unequivocal terms of the circular suggested. In fact, ministerial thinking at this time took on a Janus-like aspect in that there were already some signs of recognition of the other side of the case. The Ministry had already provided for the support of recognised experimental schools from 1957 onwards, [71] although the legislation by which this was done entailed the application of official modes of staffing and administration

not always to the liking of innovators, tensions which anticipated later experience. More immediately, in an interview in L'Education Nationale in November, 1960, M. Lebettre expressed the hope that it would be possible to generalise the Vanves experiment within five or six years, [72] thus endorsing within a month of the circular, an innovation quite at odds with the return to the tried and tested advocated in the latter. Louis Legrand found this the only heartening aspect of the whole affair but questioned the juxtaposition of the two policy statements as evidence of official thinking. [73] M. Lebettre explained this in terms of resources; in the absence of qualified and experienced teachers, the old ways were safer, given the prevalence of large classes and lack of materials, while he anticipated that resources would be available to implement the Vanves approach within 5 or 6 years.

Thus the climax of the difficulties experienced by the elementary school brought not only a retrenchment in terms which expressly broke with the curricular traditions of the primary school system of which the elementary school had been a part, but also anticipated one of the major springs of the rénovation pédagogique, the desire to combat the recognised inefficacy of elementary school pedagogy. One may go so far as to trace a tenuous link between the Langevin/Wallon Plan and the later development through the "Lebettre" circular. As already noted, the Vanves experiment was similar to, if not explicitly linked to, the recommendations of the Plan on the timetable of the elementary school. In turn, the formula of the mi-temps was to be amended into the tiers-temps pédagogique on which

the 1969 renovation was based. On the other hand, the terms of the circular had the more important effects in the years immediately following its publication, in providing support for continuing criticisms of standards and in leading to a degree of unofficial abandonment of the teaching of history and geography, even though the Director himself stated in his interview for L'Education Nationale that this was not the intention of the text. In fairness, however, it must be pointed out that the absence of timetable amendments to free additional time for the added emphasis on the basic subjects demanded by the text offered some justification for this response on the part of teachers. This was given further substance in another circular issued shortly afterwards, in which the content of a "normal" elementary school training was defined, as follows;

1) a good level of reading skill.
2) possession of certain fundamental rules of grammar.
3) correct punctuation and orthography.
4) satisfactory handling of logical and grammatical concepts.
5) knowledge and application of the metric system.
6) skilled practice in mental arithmetic.

There was no mention of any other subject in the curriculum.[74] Against the ambivalence revealed in the October circular, in which the Ministry had both demanded greater attention to French and arithmetic, but within the framework of the existing timetable,

admitting only the possibility of - and the advantages of - reducing the time spent on other subjects towards the end of CM2, the later text was quite unequivocal in its definition of the elementary school curriculum.

Thus the events of 1960 served to reduce the ambitions of the elementary school to those commensurate with the task of preparing pupils for secondary education, a course which entailed the abandonment of the wide horizons which the elementary school had shared as part of the old primary system. On the other hand, the latter interpretation of official policy remained embodied in school legislation, since the Official Instructions of 1923 remained, along with the later modifications, the governing text for the elementary school up to 1969. The resolution of the tensions occasioned by this official ambivalence lay in the future elaboration of the rénovation pédagogique.

The question of the aims and curriculum of the elementary school was only one aspect of the dissolution of the framework within which it had developed; during the same period, the school also lost the homogeneous cadre of teachers which had sustained traditional values - in theory if not always in practice.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

During the years when the perceived role of the elementary school was subject to these major changes, the teaching profession which staffed the elementary school was changed irrevocably in its composition and outlook by the effects of the staffing crisis. While this crisis contributed to the view that the elementary school suffered a general decline in standards during this period, it was still more important in its effects on the teaching force. It rendered the existing training system inadequate and obsolete, altered the social composition of the teaching force and in so doing diminished or destroyed the distinctive values on which the ethos of the instituteur had rested throughout the Third Republic. It also turned the elementary school teachers into a primarily feminine body, although this effect may be due also in part to the increasing articulation between the elementary and secondary schools. Before the war, men had tended to gravitate towards the upper classes of the elementary schools, although without leaving the ranks of the instituteurs.

At the time that these changes took place, the training system was quite unable to meet the demands posed by the rapid rise in pupil numbers in elementary schools. The école normale had become an almost sacrosanct area of French educational provision and educational or logistical arguments for its reform were to be subordinated almost entirely for two decades to the ideological significance it held to particular groups within the system, as the emblem of Republican and lay education. Even before the war, the écoles normales were somewhat anomalous in relation to

the expanding provision of upper primary schools; after the war, they were in an almost exactly similar position in relation to the lycées in the matter of preparation of the new teaching qualification, the baccalaureate, but with a status assured by the determination of the primary teachers and the left generally to preserve the institution destroyed by Vichy. This position also had its more tangible aspects for SNI, in that it preserved the career avenues on which the primary system's post-elementary courses depended.

In the post-war period the development of a coherent policy for the école normale became almost impossible in that the restitution of the institution in its revived form merely served to re-enact the tensions which had surrounded its functioning in the pre-war period. On the one hand, primary teachers wanted to gain access to a wider range of opportunities, exemplified by the desire to establish the baccalaureate as the qualification for instituteurs, but on the other they also sought to preserve their own distinctive establishments. Intending reformers and the Ministry faced similar dilemmas. The principle of widening career opportunities was advanced by the Langevin/Wallon Commission and in part accepted by the Ministry, which legislated in 1948 for a new licence in psychology and pedagogy.[1] Both reformers and Ministry, however, had to face the fact that such openings encouraged "evasions" by students and teachers who took the opportunity to leave the elementary or primary schools for more prestigious parts of the system. This phenomenon, marked under Vichy, continued into the post-war period. Against this, there

was the need still to find teachers for the rural schools and elementary classes generally. The teaching profession was caught in a position of similar ambivalence over the specific aspects of these dilemmas; SNI wished to have a distinctive university level qualification but feared that a pedagogic licence might not hold the same status as one from a traditional faculty.

The pre-war école normale has already been briefly described in the introductory chapter. It is perhaps worth stressing that even the pre-war establishment had been the focus of considerable dissatisfaction and that it had undergone several changes of regime during the previous forty years. The system of the immediate pre-war years, which had been a prime candidate for reform, had itself supplanted a system which anticipated both in form and effect, that adopted after the war. From 1905 to 1920, the course pattern had been one of two years of academic followed by one year of professional preparation, the former leading to the brevet supérieur. This pattern was criticised on grounds which anticipate later criticism of the broadly similar post-war pattern, that the academic portion of the course dominated the professional and that after the two years of intensive effort leading to the B.S., which served to make the école normale almost undistinguishable in pedagogic terms from the upper primary school, the year of professional training came as something of an anti-climax. [2]

The three year concurrent course of the immediate pre-war period had certain advantages which the post-war institutions had lost - notably that of possessing a stable and homogeneous cadre

of staff. The institution of the former period, however, engendered mixed recollections in Roger Gal's sample of pre-war normaliens.[3] The 116 teachers who responded to his questionnaire showed that while 95 of their number were generally favourably disposed towards the training they had received, there were a number of points of criticism. The value of their training was acknowledged insofar as it developed thought and character, initiated trainee teachers into a sense of their responsibilities and to the ethics of their profession and developed a strong esprit de corps. It was criticised, however, for the lack of adaptation of the training process, (like the official instructions and programmes), to the variations in the teaching task, from overcrowded urban schools to the one-class rural school, and also for its rather theoretical outlook, the lack of practical training and the absence of attention to active methods. (The last point takes us into the ambiguities surrounding this term and in and out of the official texts.) In general, the criticism was strikingly similar to that expressed by the post-war students in Gal's sample.

The dramatic reform proposed by the Langevin/Wallon Plan has already been outlined in the general body of recommendations in that document. Within the Commission and the various contributing groups, there was possibly more hesitation over the question than there was over any other aspect of school reform. There was a general recognition of the practical impossibility of implementing the final scheme, but the discussions of the Commission tended to revolve around the sorts of dilemma described in the opening

paragraphs of this chapter, a point which may be illustrated further by the retention of the *école normale* in yet another form in the recommendations of the Plan. Wallon himself, for example, had been instrumental to a certain extent in the restoration of the institutions immediately after the Liberation, a process which as Secretary-General for National Education, he had set in motion during his brief tenure.

Apart from the preservation of the institution, there appears to have been only one other point on which the members of the Commission showed complete certainty, the inadequacy of the transitional regime implemented in 1944, whereby the *écoles normales* were little more than boarding houses for pupils taking the baccalaureate classes in a *lycée*, a pattern which in Monod's words, reduced the *Directeur* to little more than "*un marchand de soupe*".[4] On the question of recruitment, for example, there may have been agreement on the principle of early recruitment, but the members of the Commission were greatly affected by doubts about the avenue through which the *normaliens* should prepare the baccalaureate. The rural question posed the dilemma in the most acute terms; Vichy experience and even early post-Liberation experience tended to show that the prime concern of rural entrants to the *lycée* was that of avoiding a return to rural schoolsat the end of training.[5] Higher education would pose the problem even more acutely since the members of the Commission appear to have taken it for granted that any *instituteur* seeking access to studies to a *licence* was trying to "evade" the elementary school. As it was, M. Barrée

claimed that the drop-out rate among rural candidates in the lycées was running at about 75%.[6] This type of problem was of course the product of existing attitudes and divisions within the teaching profession, but it was difficult to envisage the kind of rapid and complete transformation which would remove the source of the difficulty. (The same kind of explanation could be applied to the desire of the instituteurs to preserve early recruitment for the benefit of their cours complémentaires; this desire would become redundant in a totally reformed system where all teachers were on the same footing as regards status, or nomenclature, and where access to upper levels of the system would be facilitated by the reformed training system, but the instituteurs might reasonably prefer to wait and see this happen first.)

There was general agreement on a number of points. There was unanimity on the principle that the école normale should remain a boarding institution: Monod argued that only these establishments could provide the appropriate atmosphere to develop the vocation of the teacher.[7] There was also agreement that for the present, there should be two levels of recruitment, one at the traditional age of about 15, at the end of the 3è, the other post-baccalaureate. This double pattern was actually adopted by the Ministry in 1946/7, but with important differences of detail, and in the latter case, against the opposition of SNI.

On some other aspects the Commission could only explore the insoluble conflict of values which surrounded the école normale in its restored form. One member of the Commission defined the task

of the Commission as devising a means of keeping the best teachers in the rural schools while breaking down the barriers which kept them there - a definition arrived at with no sign of conscious irony. The preservation of the sacrosanct *école normale* was sought along with access to faculties which were differently distributed around the country; one proposal was for the establishment of rural annexes of the latter.[9] The Commission regretted the problem of recruitment in rural areas, but recognised the causes of the problems by regretting equally the distress caused to young *normaliennes* sent to isolated schools in the country. Paul Langevin argued that debutants should not be sent to such schools, but no one appeared to have any constructive suggestions for getting experienced teachers to return to them. The Commission talked of giving the teacher the status of the village doctor or the notary but elsewhere complained that teachers were leaving schools near Marseilles to work in a gas factory paying semi-skilled workers more than the *instituteur's* maximum. Henri Wallon harked back to the obsolescent ontology of the 1880's, in referring to the need to create a corps of "missionaries of culture".[10]

Thus despite the boldness of the recommendations of the Plan, the Commission would appear to have been quite overwhelmed by the current logistical problems and the irrefutable evidence of social and demographic change, which was to throw the system back on a series of emergency measures far removed from the kind of elevation of teacher education envisaged by the Plan. It is tempting to conclude that in holding on to what they already had, the *instituteurs*

had a better grasp of the problem than anybody - unless one credits the Ministry with an equal grasp of the intractability of the whole issue, since the question of reform was sidestepped for twenty years afterwards.

Even the points on which there was general agreement served only to intensify the problem. Early recruitment and boarding were generally accepted, but entailed a drastic curtailment of the training capacity of the system. In the immediate post-war period, there were about 160 écoles normales, ranging in size from 60 to 200 students. Prost lays much emphasis on the failure of the Ministry significantly to increase the number of these institutions in the face of the demands of the rising birth rate, but acknowledges that this only partially explained the problem which lay not only in the lack of establishments but more so in the anomalies inevitably created by the desire to retain the école normale in something akin to its pre-war form. Since the preparation of the baccalaureate took up one-half or three quarters, (in most cases the latter), of the total capacity of the institutions, expansion of the network effectively meant creating two or three lycée places for every additional place for professional training, with the additional disadvantage of greater expense, given the practice of boarding and the smaller numbers. The position of the teachers' unions only served to intensify this problem in that their desire for expansion was directly related to the expansion of their own cours complémentaires which meant that they saw expansion in terms of the first concours and thus reinforcement of the duplication of provision. In fairness

to SNI and SGEN, however, they were able to advance the weakness of post-baccalaureate recruitment in support of their case.

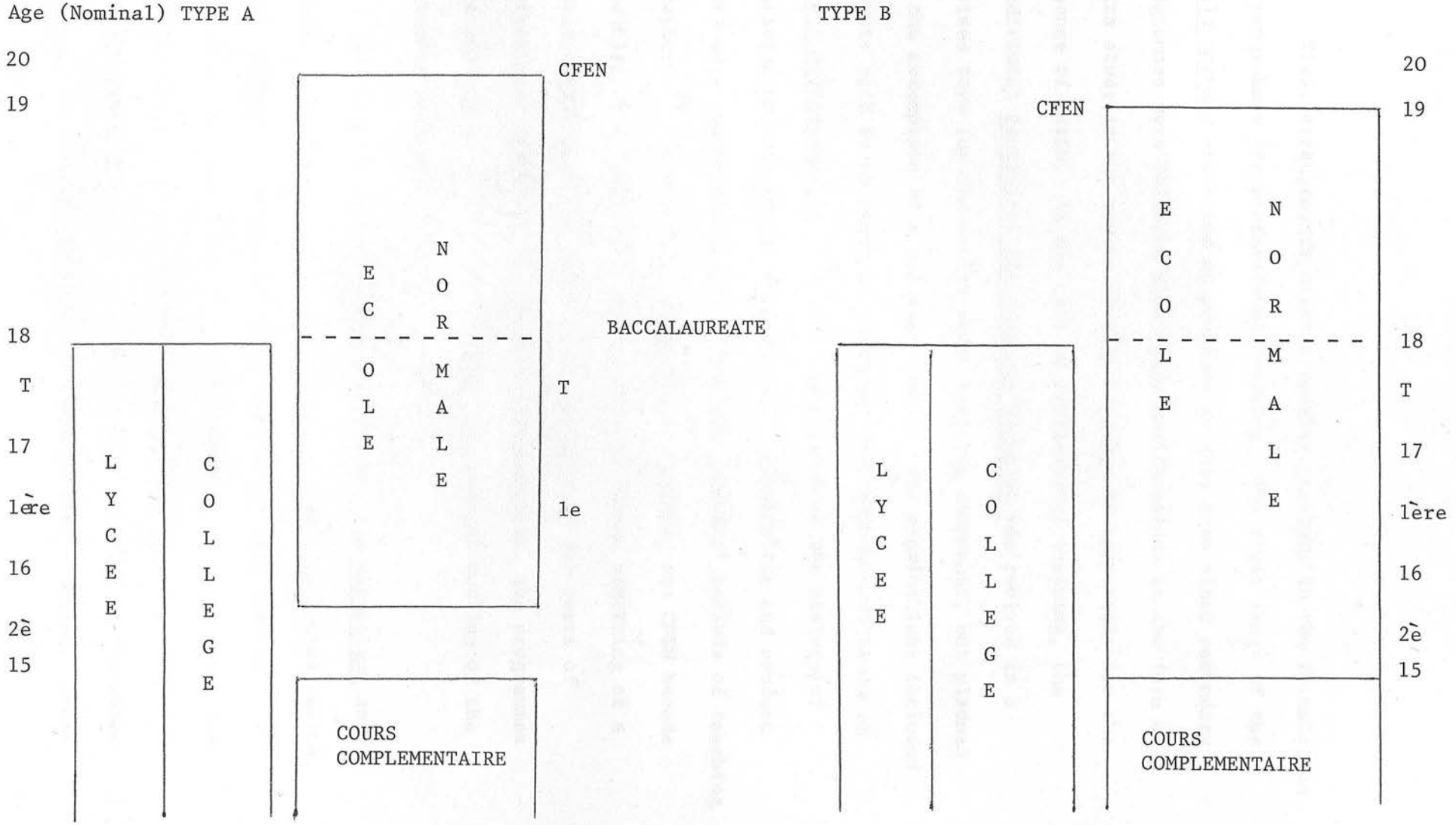
The final decision of the Ministry on the form of organisation of the écoles normales legislated these anomalies into the system of training for the next twenty-three years; such modifications as were undertaken were essentially expedients aimed at marginal increases in capacity, mostly in the 1960's. The structure of the post-war training system was laid down by the Decree of 6th June, 1946, [12] but even this legislation was subject to important modifications in practice. The decree specified recruitment via the first concours at the end of the seconde, followed by two years of baccalaureate preparation then two years of professional training. Alternatively, students might be recruited on completion of their baccalaureate, following only the two years of professional training. The age limits specified for the respective concours were 15-17 and 17-19. The boarding system was retained, although provision was made for the possibility of admitting students as demi-pensionnaires or day students. The staff were to be drawn from the secondary professorate for the baccalaureate preparation, but direction of the establishments rested with holders of the certificate of aptitude for the primary inspectorate and direction of écoles normales, thus retaining a slender link with the traditional staffing cadre of the pre-war years.

In the event, the provisions for the first concours had to be modified on what was initially a temporary basis, although

these arrangements were eventually prolonged beyond the intended termination of them in 1960. Recruitment to the classe de première was only possible in rather under half of the institutions; this provision in any case rested on a sufficiency of recruits from the collèges modernes, but the latter generally provided only one-half of the intake. (The lycées provided only a very small proportion). The resultant dependence on the cours complémentaires thus entailed recruitment at the end of the troisième and three years study for the baccalaureate, which meant a corresponding reduction to one year of professional training. The necessary modifications were recognised the following year, in successive circulars of 10th and 16th June, [13] which recognised two types of institution - "Type A", following the original framework and "Type B", on a "3+1" pattern. Throughout the 1950's, the latter considerably outnumbered the former. Further anomalies were created by the recognition of these differences in that the level at which a student began his école normale studies depended on the institution rather than his own past progress; the circulars referred to the problem created by allocation to the 2è of a candidate who might already have taken that class. Problems were also anticipated over the movement of instituteurs between departments where there was only one year of training and those which had been able to adopt the original scheme; one may reasonably assume, in the light of the massive recruitment of untrained teachers in the 1950's and early 1960's, that this problem was not unduly important in later years.

FIGURE 4

THE ORGANISATION OF THE ECOLE NORMALE, 1946-1960



These arrangements created further problems in the formulation of programmes for professional training. The first stage of the école normale presented no problems in this area since secondary programmes were followed with minor modifications in the form of extra study in the modern foreign language to compensate for the absence of Latin. In the case of professional training, the traditional certificat fin d'etudes normales was revived in a revised form for the professional training component, but planned on the assumption of a two year course. The examinations included aspects such as an essay on pedagogy, followed by oral tests on morale professionelle or school legislation or the history of education and one on child psychology. Examination and conduct marks were combined with marks from the students' periods of teaching practice.[14] In practice, according to Gontard, the CFEN became something of a formality; at any rate it became something of a hybrid, which might be taken after one year or two years of professional training.[15] In such circumstances, the programmes were subject to similar variations; the general outline of the statutory programme is given in Table 7.

As students in a boarding institution, the normaliens and normaliennes were also subject to a tightly defined social regime, which reflected both the youth of the student body and the traditional principles of the establishments. In return for the benefits enjoyed by state-supported students, they were required to teach for a period of ten years in state schools on finishing training, on pain of repaying the costs of their lodging. These

TABLE 7 THE TIMETABLE OF THE ECOLE NORMALE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING COURSES

	One year course	Two year course	
		Year 1	Year 2
Professional ethics, school administration and legislation	1	-	1
Child psychology	3	3	3
Pedagogy and teaching methods	6	2	2
History and theory of education	1	1	1
Teaching practice	3 x 1 month	1 month	1 month
French language and literature	2	2	2
Regional history and geography	1	1	1
Arithmetic	1	1	-
Science	2	1	1
Practical science	-	-	1
General education	-	1	1
Drawing and handwriting	1½	1½	1½
Domestic science, hand-work or agriculture	8 (men 9)	5	5
Music and singing	1½	1½	1½
Optional tutorial classes	-	1	1
Physical education	3	3	3
Extra-curricular activities	3	3	3
Sociology	-	1	1
TOTALS	34	29	29

SOURCE ; Council of Europe (1965). Teacher Training. Strasbourg.

costs were also repayable in the event of employment being terminated because of professional insufficiency. The ten years of service might be undertaken in any French territory, although primary teachers required an exeat from the Inspecteur D'Académie before they could leave their department of origin. (This provision was modified by force of circumstances in the 1950's, when population shifts turned ministerial attention to getting teachers out of their departments of origin where these were over-staffed.)

Within the institution, an atmosphere of strict neutrality was maintained in the expressed interests not of restoring the vase clos for which the old école normale had been criticised but of preserving the harmony of the student body by avoiding all sources of possible dissension. Thus all political, religious and syndical propaganda was rigorously excluded and even after students had gained the right of free correspondence, the Director still retained the right to open letters addressed to any group of students if he or she suspected that the neutrality of the institution was being infringed.[16] Mme Seclet Riou, however, contested the nature of this neutrality and complained that while Esprit was permitted in the reading rooms of the écoles normales, La Pensée was not.[17]

The paternalism of the regime for such young students may be deduced from the kinds of concessions won by SNI, (students in professional training having won the right to belong to a union only in 1948). These included not only the right of free

correspondence but also the right freely to leave the building on Thursdays, which were clear of classes.[18] The legislation on alcoholic drinks and young people provides an interesting footnote to the regime of the écoles normales; the 15 to 18 year olds, permitted by law to drink wine diluted to not more than three degrees of alcohol, were given the right to receive their wine undiluted and put in the water themselves.[19] On a more serious note, the paternalism of the regime, understandable given the youth of the pre-baccalaureate students, may have been a contributory factor in the poor response to recruitment via the second concours. Later comment suggests that many bacheliers preferred to go into teaching as replacement teachers, although from 1948, students in professional training were paid a salary, a point which may be related to the hostility expressed by emergency recruits, often married women, to the constraints of life in the école normale; not only could the system not train all these recruits - many of the latter were hostile to the idea of going for a year of training anyway.

The functioning of the post-war école normale encountered the same kind of problems which had afflicted periods of "consecutive" organisation in the pre-war period, arising from the dominance of the academic qualification over the priorities both of students and of staff. If bachotage was equally a fact of life in the lycée or collège, its effects were more harmful to the école normale in that the importance attached to the essential academic qualification tended to outweigh that attached to the distinctive function of

the institution. According to Gontard, the professeurs d'école normale attached little importance to professional training, which they took on merely to fulfil their weekly commitment; if pressed too hard, they responded by asking for a transfer to a lycée.[20] In this context, it must also be remembered that such staff were allocated by the normal procedures of secondary education and some professeurs arrived in the institutions to take up their first posting. Throughout the period, there were also staff shortages, later exacerbated by the demands of the birth boom on the secondary schools; in 1959, SNI complained that fully one-third of mathematics posts and one-fifth of science posts remained unfilled,[21] while in 1957, against a Ministry provision for 48 staff possessing the CAPES and 37 agrégés, the secondary directorate had only been able to furnish 14 of the former.[22] As a consequence, the staffing cadre of the écoles normales was heterogeneous even in secondary terms and leaving aside the tensions which existed between the "primary" Directors and their "secondary" staffs. In effect, the professional training year often became a year of comparative relaxation after the pressures of the baccalaureate; if this were understandable, it nonetheless detracted from the fulfilment of the main function. Gontard accused the professorate of conniving at a situation where most students ignored professional training, in which award of the CFEN became a formality. Other comment is less sweeping in condemnation, but the Director of one école normale, Robert Meriaux, concluded that the best that could be aimed for was training for survival.[23]

The comments of teachers themselves on their training does not entirely confirm these criticisms of lack of interest in professional training. The teachers trained post-war among Gal's [24] sample were certainly less favourable on the whole about their preparation in the _école normale_, but in specific criticisms they showed much the same emphasis as their colleagues trained before the war, notably on the theoretical nature of their preparation and the lack of practical work, although these tended to be perennial criticisms among teacher education students. On the other hand, the teachers generally disapproved of a training component of only one year, most wishing two years, while a small group argued for a three year concurrent course. There was a general dissatisfaction with the way in which the _école normale_ had turned into an establishment above all for the preparation of the baccalaureate, with the staff seeing themselves as specialists in a particular discipline, with no particular interest in or responsibility for professional training. Gal also consulted a number of Directors of _écoles normales_, who also expressed concern over the weight of baccalaureate studies and several of this group expressed a wish for some lightening of programmes to allow more focus on the professionally essential. On the other hand, SNI had deep reservations about such possibilities, fearing that any amendment of the baccalaureate programmes would consign primary teachers to a devalued qualification not recognised elsewhere in the system. [25]

The teachers in Berger and Benjamin's sample [26] tended to echo the above complaints, but also echoed the pre-war complaint that the institution tended to be excessively introverted; it obviously required more than a legislative disclaimer to dissipate the sense of vase clos engendered in a tightly regulated boarding establishment cut off from other branches of the educational system. In addition to criticisms directed at the balance of studies and the question of limited practical training, there were more serious criticisms from some quarters of the basic assumptions underlying the training. Roger Gal himself criticised the excessive empiricism of the preparation given, [27] a failing which he attributed to more basic reasons than those given by Meriaux, in the lack of a solid theoretical framework for training in pedagogy; this criticism is related in turn to the progressive criticisms of the pedagogy of the elementary school as a whole. As with the wider question, it was not until well into the 1960's that the question of teacher education was posed in these terms by other than a small minority.

The question of the efficacy of the training provided remained for two decades less important than the other aspects of the role of the école normale. There was a general commitment among the teachers' unions within primary education and on the political left to the maintenance of early recruitment through the first concours. Any attempt to modify this regime was usually met with virulent criticism in which both SNI and the PCF readily harked back to the example of Vichy, (thus giving the reform of

the école normale something akin to the post-war status of centralised educational control as a principle in West Germany.) There were some reasonable justifications for the continuance of early recruitment, for example in SNI's desire to preserve the essentially popular character of primary teacher recruitment which had formed such a distinctive part of the ethos of the primary school system under the Third Republic. This worked both ways in that for many pupils, access to such studies was only possible via the first concours, after their course in the cours complémentaire; for those pupils to whom access to secondary education would have been difficult or impossible, the école normale remained quite genuinely the lycée des pauvres. While, as already noted, this served the purpose of securing the development of the cours complémentaires, it did carry other risks, in that, as secondary education expanded, it would mean recruiting teachers from a shrinking pool of ability in the post-elementary sectors.

The union's other concerns meant that it developed no particular policy on the training of teachers as such, since its approach to the whole question lay between the two extremes of retaining the status quo and implementing the full scale proposals of the Langevin/Wallon Plan, although preservation of the école normale was sometimes justified in terms of the latter. The union was in favour of extending the majority provision of one year professional training to two years but this was common currency of the time; the union considered the one year course to be "a rapid and febrile" [28] initiation to the teaching function. As far as

practical proposals were concerned, SNI seemed to be concerned primarily with ontology, persuading trainees of the nobility of their task and providing the children of the people with educators "imbued with the grandeur of their task and able to fulfil it well". The former carried more sway, to judge by the reading proposed by SNI for students in training; this concentrated on the memoirs and biographies of instituteurs of the golden age of the Third Republic. [29]

SGEN also favoured the retention of early recruitment, a view which probably reflected the majority of instituteurs among its membership. There was a certain ambivalence about SGEN's views, however, in that the union was highly critical of the previous system in which the brevet supérieur had dominated the work of the école normale to the neglect of the practical side of training and the "humble essentials" of the teacher's everyday job - criticisms which were at least equally applicable to the post-war system with the baccalaureate tending to dominate all else. SGEN was in favour of baccalaureate preparation in the écoles normales, with teaching provided by secondary teachers, preferably agrégés, but also sought a greater attention to psychology in the professional training component, as well as initiation to new methods and long periods of practice in the classes of "good" instituteurs. [30] In the event, however, SGEN's twin concerns were vitiated by the effects of the double demand on the institutions and it was precisely because the primary unions got their baccalaureate preparation, (but not their

agrégés), that the latter aims were unattainable. It is worth noting in addition that as early as 1946 SGEN anticipated one of the major demands of the rénovation pédagogique, regular in-service courses to keep teachers up to date.[31]

SGEN were also prone to evoke the shadow of Vichy when any proposal to suppress baccalaureate preparation appeared, but this was given a double edge in that SGEN also had a flourishing section of the professorate of the écoles normales within its membership. By the early 1960's, this had added another aspect to the debate in that the professeurs d'école normale had come to represent yet another interest group in the question of the écoles normales. If small in numbers, (there were about 1,200 such personnel in 1960), their syndical affiliations, either to SGEN, or through SNPEN, to the Fédération de L'Education Nationale, gave them the benefit of the support of the biggest unions, whose own views on the école normale were increasingly echoed by the staffs of the establishments. By the early 1960's, the group within SGEN had come to dominate the reform question in the pages of Syndicalisme Universitaire. As recognition of the possibility of more effective use of resources by confining the écoles normales to their training function grew during the 1960's, the SGEN group argued that any such change should allow the possibility for existing staff to stay on if they wished, which suggests that the previous picture of staff who, if pressed too hard on the matter of professional training, would demand a transfer back to the lycée, was no longer entirely accurate.[32]

The views of the teaching unions had powerful support from the political left generally and the Communist Party in particular; the latter treated the question in much the same terms as SNI, at least up to the mid-1960's. In this respect, the influence of the teachers on the political left should be borne in mind as well as the fact that the unions approached the question on essentially ideological grounds. (SGEN actually criticised one of the early UNR policy discussions on the grounds that the party were seeking to "de-politicise" the instituteurs by abandoning early recruitment or training early recruits in the lycée. [33]

While the PCF approached reform proposals in much the same vein as SNI and SGEN, that is in terms of Vichy and the constant struggle to protect the école normale against the forces of reaction, the views of various figures within the party on the actual functioning of the institution sometimes conflicted quite markedly with the desire to preserve it in its existing form at any cost. J. Soletchnik, writing in L'Ecole et la Nation of May, 1956, exemplified this tendency, with the added feature of some internal contradictions. The école normale was criticised for providing an inadequate culture générale, generating little interest in personal research and for providing simultaneously an excessively abstract approach combined with a narrow "practicisme"; the whole process ended with a "house" exam sans valeur universitaire. Despite these limitations, the failure to accommodate all replacement and supply teachers in the ecole normale for this training was described as "the sabotage of the lay school". [34]

Mme Seclet Riou introduced a further note of ambivalence to the attitudes expressed in the party in that she pointed out on various occasions the extent to which the cherished image of the école normale no longer reflected the reality. She deprecated the ambiguous relationship between the institution and others in higher education and regretted that the licence in psycho-pedagogy proposed by the Ministry in 1948 had come to nought - but acknowledged that it would probably have intensified the "flight" from the elementary school.[35] She deplored the reliance of the institution on a mixed bag of staff drawn from all levels of secondary and from the primary inspectorate, so that the teaching cadre had lost all its specific character - but recognised that this might not be altogether a bad thing given the closed world in which the students existed. Mme Seclet Riou also recognised that expansion of the system of école normales, which by the mid-1950's suffered from serious staff shortages in any case, would be insufficient to meet the training needs of the vast army of untrained emergency recruits and also acknowledged that if half the trainees came from the cours complémentaires, this still meant that half came from the collèges modernes which made the principle of proletarian recruitment less convincing in practice than in theory.[36]

Such recognition of practical limitations by those in the unions and on the political left had little influence on their reactions to proposed reforms which threatened to reduce the école normale to a post-baccalaureate training institution. Whatever reservations might be expressed about the existing regime, there

was total unanimity on opposition to any such proposal. For example, the Brice project of 1962, [37] which sought to transfer baccalaureate preparation to the lycée, ran into a storm of virulent opposition and was quickly dropped. J.C. Charbonnier, writing in L'Ecole et la Nation, attacked the "calumnies" thus heaped on the staff and students of the institutions, "these veritable schools of the Republic, these original institutions", with their recruitment from the masses - more than 20% from the sons of ouvriers - "their lay and democratic spirit and a solidarity affirmed by four years of communal living". [38] The spirit of Marshal Pétain was identified lurking behind the machinations of the capitalist monopoly against the primary school, "the keystone of the whole edifice of National Education". On less emotional ground, the PCF was able to point to the continuing weakness of the post-baccalaureate recruitment; whereas in 1962, the first concours had attracted 11,420 candidates for the 3,328 places available for boys and 16,389 for the 3,672 available for girls, only 671 male bacheliers had applied for the 851 places available in the second concours; there were at least more female applicants than places at this level, 1,965 and 1,156 respectively, but this still fell far short of the proportions attracted by the traditional mode of entry. The PCF was also able to point out that the lycées were already overcrowded and that the école normale consistently showed a higher pass rate - 80-85% as against 60% in secondary schools - in the examination. [39]

These sentiments were largely echoed by SNI, which also evoked the memory of the Vichy regime's instituts de formation professionelle,

and accused the reformers of trying not to improve the training of teachers, but to reduce the cohesion and the sense of mission of the instituteurs by modifying their recruitment and the spirit of their training. SNI countered by protesting at the continuance of a temporary regime, (i.e. Types A + B), for 16 years and by demanding both expansion of the system and the institution of the original proposal for two years of professional training.[40]

Although by the early 1960's recruitment to the écoles normales had largely recovered from the crisis of the post war years, the capacity of the institutions had long since been outstripped by the emergencies of the 1950's, a process intensified by the increasing losses of students during their courses or towards secondary education on completion. In Nice, for example, from a year group of 26 normaliennes completing the baccalaureate in 1960/61, 9 had gained entry to higher education, while 4 had gone into the collège d'enseignement général which was the post-Berthoin form of the cours complémentaire. Thus only 13 proceeded to professional training and only 6 of these eventually took up teaching posts in the elementary school. From the following year group of 30, only 11 continued into the training year; in effect, post-baccalaureate losses of students tended to make the first v. second concours debate somewhat academic.[41]

Major change in the system being politically almost impossible, there were only minor adjustments designed to increase capacity in the early 1960's; marginal by definition, these were rendered even more marginal by the loss of the products to meet the staffing crisis in the secondary schools. Provision was made to modify the insistence

on boarding for students resident in the same town as the establishment at which they studied and even for students for whom suitable lodgings could be found in town. [42] Small breaches were made in the exclusivity of baccalaureate preparation within the institution by allowing candidates following certain options to attend lycée classes. [43] Although these moves were slowly extended in following years, they were already somewhat irrelevant; not only was the école normale able to train only a minority of the recruits to the elementary teaching force, it was able to direct only a minority of its trainees to the school to which they were ostensibly destined.

By this time, however, the capacity of the institutions had been so far outstripped by events that the majority of the intake to teaching during most of the 1950's were recruited straight into the classroom without going through the training course. The staffing situation of the mid- and late-1950's also outstripped the provisions made by the system for the assimilation of its cadre of replacement teachers and before looking at the effect that emergency recruitment had on the physiognomy of the elementary school teaching profession, it is worth examining in detail the extent to which the system was forced to rely on personnel who met neither the basic requirements of training nor, in a proportion of cases, the basic academic qualifications demanded of the école normale students.

The two categories of teacher in question were those of the category of instituteurs remplaçants and those in the category of suppléants éventuels. These categories represented respectively replacement teachers recruited to occupy a provisionally vacant post

and supply teachers replacing temporarily absent teachers. Replacement teachers had figured in the staffing of the system since its inception but in the pre-war period, these were paid by the day, while establishment in the profession rested on the availability of a definitively vacant post, a process which might take years. In 1951, however, a law was passed to regularise both the position of such teachers and to assimilate into the profession large numbers of the wartime auxilariat. In the circumstances of the staffing crises of the 1950's, the avenue opened by the Law of 8th May, 1951 effectively established an alternative set of norms for entry to the profession other than through the école normale, although these too were rapidly rendered ineffectual by the scale of the crises.

The Law [44] provided for the recruitment of replacement teachers in a proportion not to exceed 6% of the number of instituteurs titularisés in any department and at the same time confirmed in post those replacement teachers in service. The legislation laid down a clear pattern of training and titularisation to replace the uncertainties of the replacement teacher's previous position. These teachers were henceforth to be recruited on the basis of a five year engagement, leading to establishment in the profession; after four years, the teacher might proceed to the certificat d'aptitude professionelle, followed by a year in the capacity of stagiaire, following a course in an école normale. The law also provided for the recruitment of the second category of suppléants éventuels. Recruited by concours in the department, these teachers in theory replaced temporarily absent instituteurs, (as opposed to the replacement teacher who occupied a provisionally vacant post). After a year in service, the

supply teacher had the opportunity, subject to the decision of the Inspecteur D'Académie, of becoming a replacement teacher on the same five year agreement as outlined above. The professional training outlined by the Law took two forms, supervised teaching and a course in the école normale.

The original aims of the legislation were distorted by the circumstances of the 1950's, while some of its provisions, notably those on training, were far from universally applied. Instead of providing a means of giving the replacement teachers an assured status and the possibility of fairly rapid establishment in the teaching profession, it became simply an alternative form of recruitment which was at least as important in terms of numbers as the traditional recruitment through the écoles normales. From the outset, the intended proportions to be recruited by these avenues were increased beyond the 6% envisaged in May, 1951. This figure in fact did not survive into the school session following the passage of the Law, the proportion being increased to 7% for the 1951/52 session.[45] This proportion grew steadily during the 1950's to reach a peak of 14% in 1961-62.[46] (It should be noted that this percentage refers to the total teaching establishment, not to the annual intake of teachers; since the écoles normales between 1950 and 1965 produced annually 5,000 to 9,000 recruits to teaching as against staffing needs of up to 15,000 per annum, the percentage of "parallel" recruits was sometimes nearer 50%).

The deepening of the crisis in the mid-1950's, notably in 1956, demonstrated the difficulties faced even in the recruitment of

replacement and supply teachers with the full academic qualifications required for elementary school teachers. For example in 1956, the number of bacheliers attaining the qualification was only 43,000 against a total demand for 15,000 instituteurs of all types.[47] Faced with competing for such a proportion of qualified secondary school leavers, the system was obliged for the next few years to recruit annually about 2,000 supply teachers who did not possess the baccalaureate; these were holders of either part 1 of the baccalaureate or of the old brevet supérieur of the primary system. This entailed further measures to provide such recruits with the opportunity to complete their studies and thus enjoy the possibility of achieving established status through acceding to the status of replacement teacher. This applied only to such personnel recruited in "deficit" departments, but it is worth noting that the measures taken were not taken merely to remedy existing deficiencies in qualifications but also to improve recruitment by offering such emergency staff the advantages of a stable situation and career prospects.[48] The form taken was the institution of a brevet supérieur de capacité, (baccalaureate preparation obviously posing problems for the rural school teacher), possession of which, for a period of 5 years from 1959 to 1964, entitled the holder to a place on the list of stagiaires, under the terms of the 1951 law.

The effects of the staffing crisis showed themselves in other ways at the same time. It was found necessary in 1958 to break with the traditional pattern of recruitment by department; in the interests of encouraging teacher mobility, replacement teachers were

recruited on a regional basis from the overstaffed departments of the south.[49] Most strikingly, the same year saw the reduction of the replacement teacher's period of service prior to establishment from five years to only one year in the "deficit" departments.[50]

These measures were clearly intended as temporary measures, the modified regulations on qualification lasting until 1964, the reduced period before establishment to 1961. On the other hand, these were the years of the most intense staffing difficulties so that the short term expedients involved did affect a substantial proportion of the teaching profession. More important in the long term, however, was the effect of the crisis on the intended training process for staff in these categories. In practice, arrangements for training as laid down by the official texts seem to have represented almost as much of an unattainable ideal as the desire to train all teachers in the écoles normales. The training of the replacement teacher was to take the form of suppléances dirigées and a course in the école normale during the year as stagiaire. The former were under the supervision of the primary inspector and tended to suffer, like all the latter's pedagogic functions, from the weight of his administrative tasks and the size of his district. These difficulties were acknowledged by the Circular of 27th September, 1956,[51] which advocated cooperation between the inspectors and the professeurs d'école normale in the organisation of these periods of supervised teaching.

The provision of courses in the école normale also proved difficult both in respect of the exigencies of the staffing shortage and with the limited capacity of the institutions. By 1958, it was

necessary to provide for such training as could be implemented, on a sliding scale of urgency. The first part of preparation consisted of a stage d'information prior to entering teaching; this might take the form, according to local circumstances, of a period of 2 weeks spent with a "good" teacher, or a ten day course at an école normale. [52] The matter of preparation was of such importance that where the former course was taken, classes receiving replacement teachers were to be delayed for the necessary period before starting the school year.

Provision was also made for 2 intakes of replacement teachers to the école normales, each to receive a course of 4½ months, (as opposed to the original intention of a one year course.) Not all staff could be accommodated in this way, and entrants were selected first from those recruited the previous year, then from those previously recruited and in most need, not having gained their certificat d'aptitude pédagogique, and finally those recruited during the year in progress. Where numbers were small, they were to be integrated with the normaliens, but where there was an intake of 15-20, a separate course was to be organised. In preparation for this course, journees préparatoires were organised so as to provide the replacement teachers with information on the nature and content of the course, to allow them to fit in better on arrival. This device in turn became in effect a mode of training for those who could not be admitted to the école normale, this information being provided in monthly booklets. [53] By 1958, the latter were in the majority; out of approximately 6,000 replacement and supply teachers,

only 1,600 of the former could be catered for through courses in the training institutions. This figure grew only slowly in succeeding years, reaching 1,970 in 1961/2, while in the Department of the Seine, among the most severely affected by the crisis, there were places for only 300.[54]

Even where a training course was possible, it was beset with considerable problems. It was difficult to deal satisfactorily with the heterogeneous population of emergency recruits, some of whom in the worst "deficit departments" possessed only Part 1 of the baccalaureate, while inspectors complained of the subsequent difficulty experienced by such candidates in preparing for the CAP. In addition, the instability of population of the emergency recruits meant a high drop out rate which reached as much as one third of all those commencing training courses,[55] an aspect which meant wasted effort as well as serving to underline the difficulty of establishing the precise proportions of such recruits in the teaching profession as a whole.

These avenues of training were supplemented by journées pédagogiques on a monthly basis, organised by the inspector for the replacement and supply teachers in his district. These were held on the weekly break on Thursdays, but seem to have been less than universally applied, in that it was found necessary on more than one occasion to remind such staff that these courses were obligatory. In addition, the definitive form of the journées pédagogiques did not appear in an official text until 1964. It was specified that

groups were to average 35-40 students, undertaking 6 or 7 hours of courses or practical work. Each untrained teacher was to attend 7 per annum and to submit 6 exercises.[56] The efficacy of these courses was open to considerable criticism; for example, Gaston Mialaret dismissed them as requiring the inspector to do in minutes what should be done in hours. On the other hand, they represented all the training available to a large proportion of entrants to the teaching profession. Mialaret's own figures for one department underlined this; in 1959/60, only 4 out of 670 replacement teachers were able to take a course in the école normale, a figure which rose only slowly as the numbers of such recruits diminished, to 21 out of 463 in 1961/2.[57] (The latter diminution may be a misleading indication of even such limited progress in that the reduction in the number of emergency recruits reflected the establishment of previous generations of untrained recruits in the teaching profession.)

As a final footnote to the severity of the training difficulties, it may be noted that some staff recruited under the 1958-1965 dispensation, which waived the demand for the full baccalaureate, also had to contend with the preparation of Part II of the qualification, often in conditions of rural isolation. This entailed a combination of correspondence courses and courses followed in the école normale.

The wide range of expedients adopted to palliate the worst effects of the recruitment crisis themselves testify to the severity of the crisis in that they represent first of all a considerable

moderation of the aspirations of the original 1951 legislation in respect both of training and of basic academic qualifications. In addition, these modified arrangements increasingly took on the nature of AD HOC temporary solutions based on what could be achieved with the numbers involved. As a consequence, the effect of the crises of the 1950's was essentially a negative one in that it demonstrated the inadequacies of the existing regime of teacher preparation without significantly affecting attitudes towards the _école normale_. The immediate result was that a high proportion of teachers were thus obliged to learn "on the job", often in the most unpropitious circumstances in one teacher rural schools. (Demographic shifts had accentuated the problems posed by the latter; as the population grew, it moved to the towns so that more rural schools became one teacher establishments). The plight of the young _normalienne_ sent to begin her career in a _trou de campagne_ was lamented by the Langevin/Wallon Commission - but her successors in the 1950's were sent to such schools without the benefit of professional preparation beyond the brief _journées pédagogiques_ conducted, (or to judge by some complaints, overlooked), by the primary inspector.

Such exigencies made questions of educational reform somewhat abstract in the eyes of some of the inspectorate, not to mention the new teachers. One inspector complained that he had to explain to new teachers the meaning of such terms as programme, course, timetable, discipline and vocabulary; he had to deal with beginners who conducted the preparatory course at the level of the elementary or the latter at the level of the _cours moyen_. [58]

The [illegible] pedagogic press recognised the acuteness of the problem and journals such as the Journal des Instituteurs set out to provide material and moral support for the young untrained teacher. This on the other hand tended to give greater substance to the long standing complaint that teachers tended to be the slaves of their textbooks and their published lesson plans. The primary inspector R. Milhaud pointed to the irony that the most obsolete methods of the elementary school were paradoxically assured of survival by the circumstances of the newest entrants put a premium of tutelage and imitation as the means of learning to teach.[59] It would be difficult to establish, however, whether these risks were greater or less for urban beginners, dependent on more experienced colleagues, or for young teachers in rural schools, relying in their isolation on the textbooks, the lesson plans in the periodicals and the occasional inspector's visit.

Isolation enhanced the problems of the rural beginners in other respects. In addition to the problem of learning on the job, such teachers were frequently isolated socially, often having to contend with the indifference or hostility of a local population alienated by the rapid passage of successive untrained teachers. Resources, facilities and teachers' accommodation were also generally inadequate. The resultant professional and social isolation of the young girl in the rural school rendered rather hollow the rhetoric of the teachers' guides such as the Code Soleil, in which the rural teacher is still described as the moral and social guide of the community[60] - a tall order for a teenage girl. These problems were vividly

evoked by Huguette Bastide in her book Institutrice de Village.[61] Mme Bastide, separated from a husband away on military service and trying to cope with inadequate facilities, found little support from her union official, who assured her that everyone had to start that way, or from her district inspector, who reminisced of his own early days in teaching, when he had had to ride through the snow on horseback to reach school. There was some evidence that Mme Bastide's trials were not unique; when a reviewer in L'Education Nationale commented on the "self-pitying" aspect of her book, the journal received numerous letters from rural institutrices supporting the authoress by recounting even more extreme circumstances.[62] It would appear from this testimony that during the late 1950's and early 1960's, a rural teacher might have to cope with lodgings which were spider-infested, which lacked running water, or which opened directly off the village hall, weekend dances and all.

The pedagogic demands of the situation generated one permanent move by the Ministry to provide support for teachers in the face of these difficulties, with the inception in 1960[63] of a body of conseilleurs pédagogiques, along the lines of a service already provided for secondary teachers. These officials were intended to supplement the role of the inspectors, whose administrative distractions have already been noted. As assistants to the latter, the conseilleurs were not involved in the assessment of the teachers but were confined to the advisory function claimed in their title. Drawn from experienced instituteurs and organised at district level, the system was intended to provide one of these personnel for every

fifty teachers. The conseilleurs pédagogiques became part of the system of teacher support which outlived the immediate circumstances of the staffing crisis.

This additional provision was not unreservedly welcomed, however, and the counsellor's ambiguous position in the educational hierarchy elicited an ambivalent response from SNI; while strongly suspicious about the implications of the counsellor's relationship to the inspector, the union complained that not only was the ratio of counsellors too low but it failed to take into account variations between different areas, including variations in the proportions of supply teachers. The ratio, in the view of the teachers, was simply too low for those districts where staffing was entirely dependent on replacements. On principle, the union rejected this step as an adequate substitute for the universal professional training which it demanded, but accepted that it was reasonable response to the exigencies of the moment.[64]

The aspect of professional function was only one area in which the recruitment crisis affected the teaching force of the elementary schools. While the system was unable to sustain implementation of its training provisions for replacement staff, it nonetheless established these staff in the teaching body in large numbers. These recruits in turn came into the profession from different social circumstances and with different motivations from those which had been characteristic of the instituteurs and institutrices of the Third Republic - at the same time, of course, that many of the "traditional" recruits proceeded from the écoles normales into the secondary schools. These changes had far reaching effects on the physiognomy and values of the teaching profession.

In the first place, the post-war recruiting crises contributed to a considerable feminisation of the elementary school teaching profession. This trend had already been in evidence before the war, but was greatly accelerated during the 1950's and early 1960's. The relatively greater decline in male recruitment to the écoles normales has already been noted. At the same time, the new generation of emergency recruits showed a similar imbalance between the sexes. By 1965, the proportion of women in elementary school teaching had risen to 65.1% a proportion sustained throughout the next decade. Within these global figures, there were regional variations; Paris was particularly affected by this phenomenon, having by 1968/69 a proportion of 75.2% of women teachers as against 55.9% in Lille.[65] There was another aspect to this feminisation in that while women represented the majority of all replacement teachers, they were even more predominant in the numbers of partially qualified supply teachers. According to Yvette Martin, writing in L'Ecole et la Nation during 1969, while 65.2% of all elementary school teachers were women, the percentage rose to 75.2% for replacement teachers and 85.1% for supply teachers.[66]

In addition to the feminisation of the teaching profession, there was a marked change in the social composition of the entrants to the profession. The typical entrant no longer represented the sacrificial social promotion celebrated in the ideology of the old primary system, but as frequently arrived in teaching for want of alternatives due to failure in a faculty or after having to give up studies in order to support a student husband. In addition, there was a far higher incidence of older married women entering the teaching body.

These changes in the sources of recruitment diluted the popular character of the elementary school teaching force. Here again, however, it is important to note that the crisis reinforced rather than created a trend. Mme. Seclet Riou had already indicated the changing character of école normale recruitment by the end of the 1950's, when calling the functioning of the system into question. This loss of the old proletarian character of the establishments was confirmed during the 1960's, as the training institutions continued to draw roughly half their entrants from the secondary system, although generally from the collèges rather than the lycées.[67] If the latter contributed by 1964/65 only 5.65% of entrants to the seconde in the écoles normales, the proportion rose to 12.45% arriving in the première in Type A establishments. At the level of post-baccalaureate recruitment, a much higher proportion of recruits arrived after a full secondary career; 57.7% of second concours recruits came from the lycées, while only 18.50% of all such entrants had begun their studies in the collège d'enseignement général, the post-Berthoin form of the cours complémentaires. In the numerically much larger category of replacement teachers, the CEG proportion rose to 22.80% as against 73.30% from the lycées.[68] (The point has already been made that these figures seem to have reflected the unpopularity of the école normale regime with bacheliers, which encouraged such students to proceed directly to a teaching post rather than to the second concours).

Berger and Benjamin, in their study of L'Univers des Instituteurs, showed the effects of these changes in the teaching profession. In

the écoles normales, the children of farmers were most numerous in relation to the corresponding proportion of the population; children of manual workers made up 26% of the total, those of personnels de service 21.1%, with the liberal professions and cadres supérieures almost unrepresented. Among replacement teachers the position was noticeably different; Berger and Benjamin noted that institutrices especially in the towns came from more elevated social circumstances and with different motivation towards the job. Whereas in Berger's first survey, (of nursery school teachers in 1954), found that 55% of teachers cited vocation as their reason for entering the teaching profession, by 1960 the largest proportion of responses, totalling 45.7%, regarded teaching as a pis aller. [69] Men seem to have been even more disaffected, 60.7% of the latter offering this response. The question of the working milieu also demonstrated the changing face of the profession. Given the option, the institutrices in Berger and Benjamin's sample were much more likely than their male counterparts to choose the elementary rather than the secondary school; fully 45% would prefer to teach in a girls' elementary school to teaching in a secondary school and although this figure fell to 33.7% in boys' school, it rose to 62% in mixed schools, in which only 28% would have preferred teaching at a later stage in the system. By contrast only 30.1% of men evinced a preference for the elementary school as against 49.4% for secondary. [70]

The question of training introduced a note of partisanship between the two categories of teacher, a phenomenon also noted by Huguette Bastide who found relations between normaliennes and

remplaçantes to be distinctly frigid.[71] This partisanship also extended to those responsible for the training of the respective groups; inspectors sometimes claimed that those who had learned on the job were better prepared than the students from the somewhat cloistered ambience of the école normale, where teaching practice was usually conducted under the carefully controlled conditions of the school attached to the institution. On the other hand, Berger's sample were generally agreed on the importance of training, to save young entrants - and their first classes - the worst trials of learning on their first teaching post. Replacement teachers tended to stress the need for more écoles normales but there were some who regarded the establishments as too bookish, too sectarian and too cut off from the outside world.[72] This recognition of the need for training also appeared in the sample of teachers studied by Roger Gal. The effects of this perceived lack of preparation among replacement teachers had an influence also on attitudes to other aspects of teacher preparation; these teachers were much more favourable towards the annual conférence pédagogique than their more blasé colleagues from the écoles normales; only 32% of the latter found the annual meetings useful as against 75% of the former group.[73]

The variations in social class composition also emerged clearly from the study by Berger and Benjamin, although these figures were not specifically related to arrival routes into the profession. The Paris suburbs of Neuilly - sur-Marne and Montreuil showed a striking contrast in the social composition of staff, with 24.2% of teachers in the former originating from the cadres supérieures as against

only 8.3% of the latter, cadres moyens and employés being correspondingly more heavily represented in the latter area. These social differences were even more marked in the case of marriage ties, fully 50% of the former group being married to a husband of the highest occupational status compared to 21.1% in Montreuil. [74]

These combined factors of embourgeoisement and feminisation of the teaching force were reinforced by another, that of the urbanisation of a large proportion of the teaching force in the wake of the population shifts of the 1950's and 1960's. The influx of women from the circumstances of those in the affluent Paris suburbs was itself an urban phenomenon, reflecting further stresses and divisions in the profession. In the last decade there has been increasing evidence in the correspondence columns of the educational weeklies such as L'Education of two professional groups, the urban and the rural teachers, each with its own caricature of the advantages of the lives of the other. [75] Urban teachers frequently dwell on a pleasant image of the rural instituteur, with his logement provided by the commune and his social position still assured by his secretaryship of the mairie, a picture which rural teachers are quick to allay. The visions of idyllic rural teaching still seemingly entertained by the urban teacher may be evidence that the distinctive ethos of the profession did not travel well.

The weekly La Vie Enseignante devoted considerable attention during the early 1960's to the problems posed by the large movement of teachers to the towns, problems exacerbated by the prevailing

mode of recruitment. This was less of a problem for married women of middle class origin teaching in a school in an affluent part of the banlieue than for the mass of inexperiences and déracinés beginning their teaching careers in the less favoured districts. The journal's survey found that of 800 teachers responding, one third had come from country areas, usually for family necessity, most often for educational reasons, but also from a desire for comfort and for the distractions of urban life - Huguette Bastide longed for a pavement, neon lights and a cinema [76] - all reasons central to the drift towards the towns for the last century. Urban life seems to have diminished the militancy of these teachers, who admitted generally to being more "pantouflards" than their rural colleagues, and while the vast majority, (90% of men and 85% of women) belonged to SNI and the remainder to SGEN, only one-fifth regularly attended union meetings. In addition, the teachers identified seven-eighths of their social contacts as being outside the teaching profession, a figure which tended to support Berger and Benjamin's conclusions about the greater social integration of the urban teacher. The latter, however, found other aspects of the teacher's life in the town to set alongside the questions of the elusive identity of the urban teaching cadre, in reports of increasing stress and nervous disorders among elementary school teachers. [77] On the other hand, by 1960, the instituteur was firmly at the top of the life expectancy league in French society! [78]

If the position of the urban teacher was often difficult and unsatisfying, the position of the rural teacher appears to have

become even more difficult and the problem of the "ruraux en détresse" [79] occupied the pages of La Vie Enseignante as much as the question of the urban teacher. The rural supply teacher might be allocated to a school in the country a day or two before the rentrée scolaire - or a day or two after it - to cope with a new job amid an indifferent or hostile community alienated by the rapid passage of short-lived supply teachers. To the difficulties of undertaking a job in such circumstances, there was added, for partially-qualified staff, the need to complete the baccalaureate at the same time. The educational periodicals endeavoured to meet the need for pedagogic guidance, but at the risk of encouraging a slavish adherence to lesson plans. These circumstances had equally important effects on the social role of the elementary school teacher in the rural commune; whatever the role of the instituteur of the IIIrd Republic had been in reality, the outward signs of influence in the secretaryship of the mairie were unlikely to be evident where the new teacher was a beginner of 18 or 19 years of age. It must be borne in mind, however, that the phenomenon of emergency staff recruitment coincided with other important developments in rural society whereby a more organised, better educated and more confident rural community increasingly contested the teacher's traditional dominance over public affairs and dealings with officialdom.

These changing nature of teacher recruitment had other effects arising from this combination of factors. The homogeneity of the elementary school teaching cadre was an obvious casualty of the post-

war decades but here again the mode of recruitment of staff probably only served to exacerbate tendencies which were inherent in the process of social, educational and political change. The rural teacher would have ceased to be the characteristic image of the instituteur in any case, under the pressure of urbanisation. The tightly knit cadre of teachers drawn from the upper primaries or the cours complémentaires would also have lost this homogeneity of background as the secondary schools developed in the direction of universal secondary provision in the course of succeeding reforms, while the fact of universal secondary education would have brought into relief the internal distribution of male and female teachers within the old primary system; insofar as the former tended to predominate in the upper levels of the old primary school, the "feminisation" of the elementary school may be seen less as an effect of staffing crises than as an effect created by the changing boundaries between the various component parts of the French educational system.

In the political field, the infusion of recruits from untypical origins altered the complexion of the main teachers' union, SNI. From the early 1960's there was a progressive diminution in the elementary school teachers' concern for laïcité in that while the principle remained important, it ceased to be the perspective from which all educational questions were viewed. The composition of SNI changed but in ways which reflected other tensions than those arising from the staffing emergencies. With the creation of the CEG in 1959 and the CES in 1963, considerable numbers of primary teachers gained

access to secondary schools, a phenomenon reflected in the union journal itself; from 1960, L'Ecole Libératrice appeared in two editions, one for secondary and one for elementary teachers. The tensions underlined by this development lie outwith the scope of the present study, but it is worth remarking that these two were implied by the trend of events; if SNI were successful in gaining access to secondary work for its members, this involved creating a certain disparity of interests within the union as the price of this success.

On the other hand, the effects of feminisation on the union are largely a matter of inference. While the balance of membership in the elementary sector within SNI changed during the 1960's, this was little reflected in the union's title or its publications, which still tended to be dominated by men. The moderation of political attitudes in the union may also be due to a variety of factors. The greater integration of the teaching profession within urban society may be one possible factor, along with the influx of recruits from other than the traditional sources of recruitment serving to diminish the proletarian character of the profession. In any case there has been during the last twenty years a shift in values within the main teachers' union, towards the view that it should be concerned with "ses propres soucis". This tendency has taken a further stage shown in Ida Berger's recent follow up to her classic studies of the 50' and 60's; fully one-quarter of the sample of teachers she consulted in 1974 reported that they belonged to no union at all, either on the grounds of cost of subscriptions or of reaction against

the politicised nature of the existing unions.[80] An attempt was in fact made to launch a new, apolitical teachers' union in 1968 but this appears to have had little effect.[81]

To sum up, therefore, the dissolution of the traditionally homogeneous teaching body of the primary school system paralleled very closely the dissolution of the system which it had served and of the political and educational values which had animated that system. This was not solely the product of emergency recruitment which served largely to accelerate trends which were evident in any case. The effects of such emergency recruitment must be set against the fact of the "flight" of many of the traditional recruits to the primary teaching profession towards other career avenues. The result for the elementary school was a sense of declining morale corresponding to the declining material circumstances following the rapid rise in the birth rate, which bequeathed to the Fifth Republic a heterogeneous body of trained, untrained and often alienated staff.

These circumstances served to call the training system into question more effectively than any reform proposal of the 1950's or early 1960's, in terms of the clear practical implications of the trend of events. Either a large proportion of the teaching profession, established in the profession frequently without benefit of the *a posteriori* training demanded by law, were inadequate to the task, or the training provided in the *écoles normales* was superfluous. This problem was articulated with increasing frequency in the early 1960's.[82] In addition, this phenomenon of alienation was not

confined to the new arrivals who took up teaching after failure in a faculty, but was reflected also in the attitude of experienced teachers remaining in the elementary school as it lost the prolongations of the old primary system. This phenomenon was noted by Berger and Benjamin among others. If the rural instituteur could still evoke a picture of France as the 1960's came to an end, it was perhaps that of Henri Charrière's father tending his garden in his village in the Ardèche rather than the heroic missionary of the "universal Republic" evoked by the poems of Jules Romaines. The somewhat fortuitous literary allusion in the former may serve as an appropriate conclusion to this chapter.

C H A P T E R V

THEORY AND PRACTICE IN FRENCH ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The reasons for treating this topic at this stage in the thesis reflect the varied development and influence of different schools of pedagogical thought in the post-war period. In the first place it has already been noted that official theory represented a distinct body of principles which reflected neither a "traditional" nor a "child-centred" view of education, but a body of educational thinking which drew on diverse sources and which interpreted these according to the central aims of the educational system. Traditional theory as such, where it is most applicable to the present study, represents something more than the formulation of a set of educational values; the social and educational changes of the post-war period presented the traditional school of pedagogy with an increasingly difficult task in relating traditional values to the problems of the system as it existed and it is in this position of responding to a changing educational scene that we shall be mainly concerned with traditional theory in this chapter. Finally, it was only in the 1960's that the various strands of new progressive thinking developed and multiplied, while the movements of longest standing, that of Freinet and the GFEN, came to have an increasing influence on official policy. The last two, along with Cousinet, have already been mentioned briefly in Chapter I, by way of illustrating the solitude of the innovator in the face of the structures of the official system; if this solitude tended to remain in the 1960's in relation to everyday practice, it was mitigated somewhat by the advent of new movements and by the growth of a certain degree of official tolerance of innovatory efforts, in which I.P.N. and some members of the inspectorate played a leading part.

Obviously, in a chapter of this length, it is impossible to give more than a summary of the main threads of educational theory in France; the works of Henri Wallon and Celestin Freinet have both been the subjects of doctoral theses in themselves, while Georges Snyders and Guy Avanzini have both provided general surveys of French educational theory, the latter in particular being extremely comprehensive in scope.[1] My main concern is to show how the various schools of pedagogical thought, (none of them exclusively concerned with the elementary schools), influenced and were influenced by events during the period under study and how they related to each other and to the official pedagogy of the school system.

The ambiguities surrounding the terms of the Official Instructions have already been discussed in Chapter I. These ambiguities were given clearer focus by a survey conducted by L'Education Nationale during the school year 1961/2, a survey which was intended to provide a body of advice for the untrained teachers whose provenance and problems have been discussed in the preceding Chapter. Only 20% of the teachers responding advocated traditional methods as such, these being usually defined in terms of summary quotation of Alain and advice to have the child repeat, copy and imitate, while only 2% professed support for l'éducation nouvelle, citing Freinet techniques, pupil initiative or free activity. The remaining 78% advocated the use of the active method, defined most concisely as following the Official Instructions.[2] Thus official prescription appears to have dominated teacher

perceptions of pedagogy, legislation in effect validating its own terminology; to put it another way, this was the "euphorico-emphatic" seen through the other end of the telescope.

This characteristic of official pedagogy in France may be seen as a continuing phenomenon in that the Ministry has continued to remain somewhat aloof from the traditional-progressive dichotomy in educational theory and distinctly eclectic in the formulation of official policy on this subject. Thus while the prevailing secondary view of elementary curriculum and pedagogy may be seen reflected in the Lebettre circular, the central tenets of traditional pedagogy as represented by Alain and Jean Château have never been incorporated as such in Official Instructions for the elementary school. Similarly, the increasing influence of some aspects of l'éducation nouvelle on recent instructions has been subject to considerable moderation in official texts, which have stopped short not only of full endorsement of any one of the competing progressive theories, but even acknowledgement of such as have influenced reformed Instructions. (In the latter case, however, it is true that the juridical, anonymous formulation of such Instructions has always excluded such acknowledgements, save to Rousseau and Montaigne). This discreet eclecticism characteristic of the Ministry thus lends an additional dimension to the question of the influence of theory on official prescription and school practice; the reservations of the Ministry may be seen in another perspective in that much French educational theory has been conceived in a spirit of opposition to the official system, this

opposition encompassing the radical, the Rousseauian and the revolutionary.

The dominant figure in the traditional school of pedagogy was the Radical philosopher,Alain, whose work Propos sur L'Education enshrined the central values of the secondary teaching force.[3] Alain's theory of education rested on the proposition that the teacher must present above all a model of adult culture to which the pupil might aspire. Thus the teacher's role transcends the command of subject matter; the teacher should strive to be the revered model of adult culture in its entirety. This reverence is also something quite distinct from the assumption of close personal relationships, being altogether more elevated than simply friendship or affection between teacher and taught. Alain in fact distrusted the influence of parents and regarded a father as the worst possible professeur for his son.[4] The philosopher appears himself to have generated responses of the kind demanded by his own theories and "pupil of Alain" occasionally appears in professional biographies, including that of Roger Gal.[5]

As follows from the above standpoint, the role of the child in the educational process was seen in terms diametrically opposed to those of the Rousseauian school. In contrast to the latter, Alain's view of the child was one of an "ignoble savage" whose redemption was unconditionally the task of the teacher through the communication of adult culture and the values of adult society. These values were held to be absolute and Alain made no concession to theories of child development which were in any case in their

infancy during the period of his main work. The task of the child was to repeat, to copy, to imitate; the privileged mode of access to culture was through the cultivation of the memory. To this end, it was inevitable and even necessary that the child learn matters beyond his immediate understanding as the basis of the process of dépassement of his present limitations which constituted an education.

Alain's educational thinking had considerable influence during the period under study in that his view of education formed the basis of much secondary criticism of the elementary schools as well as, on occasion, the status quo in the pedagogy of the school. It is important, however, to note the ambiguities which surrounded Alain's influence during this period. In the first place, his work could equally be cited in criticism of some long standing practices within the system and the educational press was witness to the selective use of quotation which could bring the author's authority to buttress widely different viewpoints. Writing in the late 1920's and 1930's, Alain had found much to criticise in the practice of giving cours de Sorbonne totally inappropriate to the needs of young children. [6] He was equally critical of the role of the "inspecteur-gendarme" in the system, [7] a point which if it echoes the spirit of Le Citoyen contre les Pouvoirs, also brought Alain into direct agreement with criticisms from the other side of the traditional-progressive divide, notably from Freinet. There were, however, more direct contradictions within the body of Alain's work which afforded support to both sides of educational debate.

If on the one hand, one might quote the words "répéter et faire répéter, corriger et faire corriger" as exemplifying Alain's principles, he also advised against excessive correction of the child's work. [8] If it was not necessary that the child understand all that he learned, Alain still held that moral education could be based only on action by the child. [9]

In addition to debates centred around possession of the letter of Alain's legacy, reformers such as Bloch and Gal also refused to surrender possession of the spirit of Alain even where the opposition might seem firmly possessed of the letter. Thus Marc-André Bloch pointed out the hostility which Alain had shown to the failings of his own time which had reduced traditional education to a caricature based on the routine and the mechanical, that Alain had been a man of his time writing in advance of the full development of the sciences of education and that the "great and generous"Alain had never intended that his writings be used as support for the denial of all culture beyond the basic skills to the elementary school. [10] Thus Alain's dictum on the proper task of the Director of Primary Education was interpreted in opposing terms by different parties to the debate over elementary school curriculum. In the view of the secondary teachers, Alain had definitively fixed the limits of the ambitions of the elementary stage, while for Bloch, Gal and others, he had provided merely a reminder of the basic minimum essential to retain in the face of the demands of the encyclopaedic programmes.

These debates around the revered thought of Alain had something of a theological character in that the philosopher himself was no longer involved in the debate, his thought was seemingly inviolate in itself and open only to differences of interpretation according to the viewpoint being buttressed with his authority. (In any case the plethora of selective quotations from Alain's work calls to mind Hofstadter's comments on the influence of Dewey on American educational thinking, to the extent of encouraging the speculation that Alain too was "sometimes even read").[11] In addition, such reliance on Alain also posed the risk of fossilising traditional theory in the absence of any fresh response to new and changing circumstances. In this respect, it is more significant for the assessment of the influence of traditional theory in French education to study the extent to which it could respond to such changes. The most significant of such responses during the 1950's and 1960's was that of Jean Château, the most prominent successor to Alain within the field of traditional values.

In many respects, the work of Jean Château echoes that of his predecessor, especially in the primacy accorded to the training of the memory and in the rejection of the affective links of the family as failing to provide a solid basis for the process of education. Château reiterated and developed Alain's view of the revered and remote teacher, partaking of something of the nature of a character in a novel and retaining it in the memories of his pupils.

The content of education should avoid topics related too closely to contemporary life, so as to avoid arousing the passions and to cultivate a sense of detachment. Thus the gulf between school and life castigated by progressive critics became a positive virtue, making the school "not a cage, but a citadel". [12] (This reasoning echoed in one respect the official conception of the neutrality of the school and its training institutions, protected by law from all outside influences).

Château also added some distinctive emphases of his own, notably in his recognition of the educational value of play. (French educational thinking thus offers an interesting reversal of normal assumptions, in that Château was opposed in this by a progressive theorist, Célestin Freinet, who rejected play in education). Château's views were rather similar to those of the Advisory Council for Education in Scotland as expressed in their 1946 Report on Primary Education. [13] Through play the child learned the rudiments of social life through the need to cooperate with others to evolve the rules which were necessary for the success of the game, which thus provided a means through which the child might express his need for order. In addition, Château recognised the value of psychology and lamented the failure of the French educational system to develop the network of psychologists envisaged in the Langevin/Wallon Plan, although he paid tribute to the efforts of the écoles normales in this respect.

Georges Snyders has argued that traditional educational values have become obscured in the last three decades by a tendency to distort traditional theories into an apologia for the failings of the existing system. [14] This may be seen as justified comment on the partial quotations from the work of Alain in defence of the routine and mechanical aspects of education. On the other hand, the development of Château's thinking suggests that the malaise of traditional values runs rather deeper than this, in a failure to come to terms with some of the trends of the post-war period and in an apparent loss of faith in traditional values in the face of these trends.

In some of the major debates of the 1950's, Château's response was firm and unequivocal. He was hostile to such reforms as the abolition of homework which he regarded as exemplifying the best of the "true active method". [15] He also evinced sympathy for M. Tranquille and his fellow parents; a working child was a busy child and a busy child was a quiet child. In a large family this was not a minor consideration. Château was also in favour of the values expressed in the Lebettre circular and the restoration of the par coeur to a central role in education [16] - in this respect, official pedagogy reached its closest rapport with traditional theory in the circular in question.

Elsewhere, however, Château demonstrated an increasing pessimism and defensiveness in the face of the growing criticisms of the existing school regime. In Ecole et Education, published in 1957, he was rather dismissive of the various theories of

l'éducation nouvelle to the extent of arguing that traditional educational values hardly signified a rejection of l'éducation nouvelle, since the various expressions of the latter, stripped of their ideological language and their false psychology, represented more of a return to genuine traditional values than real innovations. At the end of the whole debate, culture générale in its traditional sense still represented "the true active method". Similarly, the emphasis on the interests of children merely created a false juxtaposition with instruction, since the former only drew children towards the latter, in the form of the order provided by adult authority, which must be guarded intact, as the model which the child venerates and to which he aspires. By the time of the publication of Autour d'Elève in 1968, Château was much more pessimistic and lamented that everywhere l'éducation nouvelle had supplanted traditional education, [17] an emphatic if not euphoric judgment which did not quite tally with the equal and opposing pessimism of the advocates of the former.

Château also became rather defensive in relation to the participation of other interested parties in educational debate of the period, giving his later expressions of traditional views a somewhat embattled air and forcing him into somewhat expedient alliance with groups previously rejected by traditional theorists. Château responded vigorously to the growing medical criticisms of the existing school regime but in a form at times reduced to the ad hominem arguments already noted in Chapter III. Chateau's

case rested largely on the need to protect the school system from such outside interference, on the grounds that discussing pedagogy in public was, like discussing a cure for cancer, a futile exercise. He countered the increasing complaints of overloading of the elementary school programme by insisting that since school work was something halfway between work and play, it could not be compared to work in a factory, while the pupil did not have the same responsibilities as the adult had to face after work.[18] (In support of this argument, Château was able to call on Célestin Freinet, who still spoke of "jeu-travail" in the 1950's rather than exclusively of "travail" as in his later work). Château fell back on a modification of Alain's Citoyen contre les Pouvoirs, L'Homme contre les Experts and on the support of the parents whom he and Alain had previously excluded from the educational process.

This recourse to parents was not without certain contradictions. Alain had argued that the family did not provide a good educational environment, a point which Château had taken further, asserting that the modern family did not even provide a good family environment; indeed, the prime aim of education was to free the child from the influence of the family. On the other hand, faced with the medical and other "experts", Chateau appealed to the silent majority of parents, who if they made less noise and were wiser than the experts, provided a defence against the latter, who were also accused of creating their own problems; Chateau attributed the increased nervous tension

reported among pupils to the increased medical surveillance.[19] Thus Château ended up with a set of relationships defined almost in "stone-paper-scissors" fashion; the task of the school was to free the child from the influence of the parents, while the task of the parents was to free the teachers from the experts.

In one final respect, the progress of Château's work shows either a loss of faith in one of the central values of Alain's thought - or else acknowledges the implicit limits within which these values were circumscribed, the values being formulated and sustained within the selective environment of the lycée so that continued adherence to the values rested on the continuance of the selective system. In contrast to the inspiring vision of dépassement as an open-ended process in the thought of Alain, this aim being the entire justification for the repetition, the copying and the imitation which would allow the child to transcend his existing ignorance, Château had by the late 1960's become deeply pessimistic about the possibilities of mass education. He asserted that it was sometimes dangerous to teach people to read, a process which created only dissatisfactions and empty pretensions; "le rustre est d'ordinaire plus heureux que le demi - intellectuel".[20] Accordingly, Château argued that it would be better to concentrate on integrating pupils into society through vocational training, it being better to succeed at a lower level than to fail at a higher, a decision which entailed a concrete and practical rather than an intellectual training for an unspecified proportion of the population. This

standpoint was further supported by the view that some jobs demanded conditioned rather than educated workers.

This final vision of the process of dépassement central to traditional theory illustrates the failure of traditional theory to come to terms with changing educational aspirations in that it was expressed at a time when the prospect of universal secondary education was rapidly becoming a reality after the establishment of the Collège d'Enseignement Secondaire in the Fouchet reform of 1963. As an avowedly selective theory, Château's work was quite out of harmony with the trend of the times. Nor can this be sufficiently explained by Château's lack of sympathy with many aspects of modern life - he dismissed l'éducation nouvelle as no more than one of the fads of the age, like painless childbirth, sex without venereal disease and dishwashing machines [21] - in that this unease was shared by such figures as Louis Legrand and Célestin Freinet on the other side of the pedagogic divide; Château's response, however, seems to have been unremittingly negative. It is perhaps a fitting irony that the final statement of his theoretical position, Autour d'Elève appeared in the same year as the most dramatic rejection by students of detached culture handed down by remote professeurs.

The other end of the spectrum of educational views, represented by l'éducation nouvelle, encompasses a wide variety of individuals and educational movements, a range which has evolved considerably over the last two decades. The term l'éducation nouvelle has a somewhat wider meaning than the

English term "progressive", embracing not only movements based on distinctive sets of educational values and practices, but also organisations devoted primarily to the dissemination of new ideas and new methods. Some of the movements have a semi-official status. One might also include under this heading those bodies committed to reform of subject syllabuses and influential in the development of new programmes; some of these groups endorse the general principles of l'éducation nouvelle which may be inherent in their approach to the reform of teaching in a specific subject. These various movements, however, exhibit many areas of disagreement, both on pedagogical and political questions, while the process of evolution of l'éducation nouvelle has progressively redefined the "avant-garde" of French pedagogy and while the work of a new generation of Rousseauian and post-Marxist critics of schooling has called even the basic assumptions of l'éducation nouvelle into question.

The movements aimed at dissemination are most easily described. Two examples of such movements are CEMEA and CRAP, Centre pour L'Entraînement dans les Méthodes de L'Education Active and Cercles de Recherche et Action Pédagogique respectively. The former, established in 1936, runs a wide range of courses for teachers, courses which serve as an extension of the training system, or have served even as a replacement for the training which many entrants did not receive. These courses are approved by the Ministry as a contribution to the rénovation pédagogique, thus enjoying a semi-official status. The personnel for the

staffing of these courses is mainly drawn from the ranks of classroom teachers; by the mid-1970's, some 3,500 teachers were involved with the movement.[22]

The CRAP network also functions as a form of collective self-training for teachers, designed to respond to teachers' own perceptions of their professional needs. The latter organisation, however, has tended to remain largely a secondary body, at least until recent years, a point reflected in its journal Cahiers Pédagogiques, which if it no longer carries specific reference to secondary education in its title, still tends to be dominated by secondary school issues. On the other hand, CRAP has had long-standing links with other major forces in the reform movement, for example with GFEN, (Gustave Monod was one of its honorary office-bearers), and with the subject reform movements such as APMEP. It has also moved towards semi-official status; some years ago its collection of resources for teachers was integrated with that published by I.P.N.

The above movements are essentially bodies of teachers and educationists. The organisation Défense de la Jeunesse Scolaire, DJS, carried the question of reform into wider fields than those encompassed by purely professional groups and attracted the membership of a wide range of major figures involved in the re-appraisal of the curriculum of the elementary school. The Comité D'Honneur of DJS included such figures as Gustave Monod of the Langevin/Wallon Commission, Dr Fourestier and M. David from the Vanves experiment and two doctors, Debré and Douady,

whose report in 1962 on the effects of school fatigue was to have a major influence on the direction of official thinking on elementary school pedagogy. DJS was less concerned with enunciating a specific set of principles than with drawing attention through a campaign of publicity and parent education to the malfunctions of the school as it existed. The book Rébâtir L'Ecole, [23] published under the auspices of the organisation, represented a comprehensive indictment of the status quo in elementary school and in secondary. Insofar as the work presented a summation of the criticisms of the existing school regime, it will receive fuller attention in the next chapter, in the context of the origins of the rénovation pédagogique.

The role of the Groupe Française de L'Education Nouvelle, has already been discussed at length in Chapters I and II. GFEN describes itself as a non-dogmatic organisation not committed to any single theory of l'éducation nouvelle, a stance consonant with the reservations of Henri Wallon, who remained President in succession to Langevin until his death in 1962, about the various forms of progressive educational theory. GFEN has endeavoured to fulfil something of a co-ordinatory role, having been instrumental in the establishment in 1967 of a review, Interéducation, published jointly by GFEN and five other movements, as well as in the foundation of the Comité de Liaison pour L'Education Nouvelle. Its own identified source of inspiration tends to confirm the emphasis on the non-dogmatic character of

the movement, in that it acknowledges a debt to the Belgian educator Ovide Decroly. According to Gaston Mialaret, Decroly refused to write a book to synthesise the views developed in his many articles on the grounds that this would deprive his ideas of their dynamism since the printed word would encourage dogmatism.[24] Given the semi-official status of GFEN, one may also see the organisation as reflecting a longstanding tendency towards eclecticism in official thinking on education. This status, however, does not mean that GFEN has ceased to be critical of official policy or has sacrificed a distinctly left-wing view of education and society and the movement has remained faithful to the principles enunciated by its two most famous members, Langevin and Wallon.

The movement was actively involved in several aspects of the development of the rénovation pédagogique, an involvement which reached its climax in the Commission pour la Rénovation Pédagogique of 1968, in which the principles of the Langevin/Wallon Plan were restated.[25] The movement has also been critical of the actual implementation of reform, denouncing for example the gulf between research and practice and the dominance of the new class of "Chomskian mandarins" over the process of reform of programmes.[26]

The various movements of l'éducation nouvelle concerned with the formulation and implementation of a specific set of educational principles and practices provide a wide variety of educational thinking which might be seen as creating the need

for some non-dogmatic organisations like GFEN to provide some common ground and a forum for the exchange of frequently conflicting views on the attainment of largely common ends. If these ends have been largely common to a substantial number of movements, the latter have tended to develop at best in isolation, at worst in open hostility to each other, such divisions, according to the inspector Aurélien Fabré, being responsible in part for the slow spread of influence of progressive pedagogy against the weight of the inertia of the official system. [27]

Some of these movements are non-French in origin, the most notable of these centring on the work of the Belgian Ovide Decroly, mentioned above in the context of GFEN. There is an experimental school at St. Mandé, which runs on the principles established by Decroly. The school was established in 1946 and received some official acknowledgment in 1948, being attached to an _école normale_ in the capacity of an _école d'application_. In recent years, however, the existence of the school has been somewhat precarious, while the application of the formal and bureaucratic staffing machinery adopted for officially recognised experimental schools has proved a source of difficulty. [28]

Decroly's educational principles also rested on a degree of eclecticism in that he was profoundly influenced not only by Rousseau but also by John Dewey. In addition, he partly derived some of his principles from evolutionary theory. In his school _L'Ermitage_, established in 1907, Decroly sought to bring the school into close proximity with its environment so

as to base education on the needs of children by providing opportunities for free play and by limiting the transmission of knowledge to the essential minimum. This was done through adoption of the practice of developing "centres of interest", (for which idea European pedagogic circles generally recognise Decroly as originator), facilitating in turn a learning process based on Decroly's interpretation of psychological development, through observation and association to expression. As a result, the programme of the school, being a by-product of this process, was greatly reduced, in volume if not in range, that is to say that the minumum was not defined solely in terms of the basic skills. Decroly's main technical innovation was the adoption of the global method of teaching reading, justified in terms of the view that for the child, "from the simple to the difficult", "from the concrete to the abstract" meant a progression from the phrase, through the word and syllable, to the letter. As a result, Decroly had a lasting influence on the pedagogy of the elementary school in France in that his method has enjoyed equal official status in French schools, (since the Ministry has neither specified nor forbidden any specific method), although used by only a minority of teachers.

In other respects, his influence is more open to question. While Decroly's work was instrumental in the lightening of school programmes in Belgium, it had no influence on French practice in this respect. If his "centres of interest" penetrated into everyday school practice, it was at the price of having these

principles reduced to the routine and mechanical, as the justification for a set of formal exercises around a theme, encouraging that passivity in the face of the concrete already noted in the formulations of the Official Instructions. Decroly influenced not only Wallon and the GFEN but also Célestin Freinet, but in the latter case it appears to have been more of a cautionary influence than a positive one. Freinet devoted considerable thought to the fate of Decroly's work in the schools and pointed out to his own followers the danger of slavish adherence to the ideals of the founder in such a way as to transform dynamic ideas into a sterile dogmatism. It is likely too that the experience of the Decroly methods contributed towards Freinet's fear about the price of official acceptance by which the essential character of his methods might be lost. On the other hand, Freinet argued that his movement, ICEM, had identified the true interests of pupils with the texte libre and the printing press, whereas Decroly's centres of interest had been conceived as "ready to wear", thus becoming simply another type of school exercise.[29]

The veteran figure in French progressive theory was the former primary inspector, Roger Cousinet, whose career as a writer and innovator lasted slightly longer than that of A.S. Neill in Britain. Cousinet represented the purest form of Rousseauian inheritance in French education, dominated by the belief that the child is corrupted by, and only by, society. The resultant form of "negative education" in Cousinet's theory

rested on the needs and interests of children seen against the assumption that all distortions of these needs are of adult origin. The child if left to himself, or to his peers in free group work, will pursue his own true needs and interests; as adult interference will serve to distort these and to introduce false desires as opposed to genuine needs, so all such desires are the product of adult interference, for example the taste for sweets or the desire for competition. [30] This set of assumptions necessarily effaces the role of the teacher, however fulfilled; Cousinet rejected not only the traditional view of the teacher but also any suggestion that the teacher works by stimulating the interests of children, which he regarded as the distortion for adult ends of the spontaneity of the child. [31]

It followed from such views that Cousinet rejected also the notion of a pre-determined programme and he criticised what he saw as the circular reasoning which underlay much programme content; every French child had to learn about Joan of Arc because every French adult knew about Joan of Arc as part of their common national heritage, but then every French adult knew about Joan of Arc because every French pupil had to learn about Joan of Arc. [32] Finally, Cousinet rejected the <u>école parallèle</u> of the mass media, because the latter did not respond to the true interests of children.

In the post war years, Cousinet moved outwith the state system to set up his own private school in Boulogne, later moving to La Source, whence he propagated his theories in a monthly

review, Educateurs, (not to be confused with Freinet's L'Educateur). His movement, L'Ecole Nouvelle Française remained small in numbers, like all the others, but also less controversial, which may be a measure of its limited influence. The monthly review was critical of many aspects of the traditional system but showed little of the inbuilt political antagonism towards the state system marked in the other movements of l'éducation nouvelle. Cousinet himself combined the running of his school with lecturing on pedagogy in the Sorbonne. If his theories had little effect on the mainstream of pedagogical thinking, they did have an indirect influence in future years, in that Cousinet's work represented one of the influences on the later non-directive movements, although the extent of this is difficult to determine on account of the shared inheritance from Rousseau as well as the influence of the American Carl Rogers on the later movements.

The twenty years after the war were dominated in terms of innovation and opposition to the official system by the enigmatic figure of Célestin Freinet,[33] whose earlier departure from the state system has already been described in Chapter I. In the post war period, Freinet made a major impact on French educational theory and practice, although his movement would on occasion dispute this assertion. His educational theories were elaborated in a series of books and an enormous range of articles and show many threads of influence on his thinking as well as some major ambiguities. His pedagogical theory and practice was derived

from a wide variety of influences, educational, political and philosophical, while the admixture of these influences affected his relationships with the official system, especially when there was indication of official acceptance of some of his ideas. Whatever the influences from his own self-directed education, Freinet was a highly distinctive and original contributor to French educational debate, being regarded by Cousinet as a kind of French Tolstoy.[34]

His own health following war wounds necessarily excluded class teaching on the traditional pattern, while he also abandoned the traditional position of the teacher at the front of the classroom, taking his own desk down among those of the pupils. His particular interpretation of child-centred pedagogy, however, was influenced by his distinctive political and philosophical views. Since most of the schools of l'éducation nouvelle had been directed towards the education of the children of the bourgeoisie, Freinet sought to develop a mass pedagogy, suitable to bring about the transformation of the public primary/ elementary school.

Freinet differed from other schools of progressive education firstly in his rejection of play as an educational activity, play being in Freinet's view of displacement activity undertaken by the child deprived of the opportunity for productive labour.[35] His views seem to have taken time to evolve to their fullest statement of this position since in his letters to Paul Langevin, he referred to the "jeu-travail" at the basis of his pedagogy,

a formula to which he still adhered in 1952, (thus providing some possibly unintended support for Jean Chateau's views on homework).[36] This rejection of the value of play was accompanied by rejection of some of the other common elements of progressive theory, for example the belief in the value of the spontaneous interests of children; Freinet sought to avoid the pitfalls of l'éducation attrayante, favouring a process of systematic and organised work in which no step was undertaken before the previous one had been mastered.[37] Against the background of these views, the term texte libre takes on a different shade of meaning than might be derived from a literal translation as "free writing", although expression of these nuances poses some problems. The point has been open to some misunderstanding in France as well and Marc-André Bloch commented on the apparent contradiction of Freinet's requirement that the pupil submit three textes libres per week.[38]

The psychological basis of Freinet's pedagogy was the principle of "tâtonnement expérimental", which might be translated as "cautious or tentative progress by experiment"; viewed by Freinet as something quite different from trial and error, this process rested on a belief in the child's "permeability to the environment" as the basis for a learning process always open to question, avoiding what Freinet regarded as the false certainties of formal sciences. This capacity was seen as a diminishing process over the first twenty years of the individual's life, reaching a residual level at around the age

of 20.[39] This psychological basis in turn rested on the philosophical underpinning of Freinet pedagogy, the belief in a natural dynamism as the animating force in life; man lived, as did the flower or the animal, according to the rhythm of the seasons, part of a cosmic dynamic the rules of which he was obliged to accept. The evils of capitalist society interfered with this process through the creation of urban industrial life, slums and working class houses lacking air, a horizon, trees, flowers and animals; the urban child grew up in an environment akin to that suffered by the animals in the Jardin des Plantes.[40] The preservation of the appropriate environment necessitated further steps to preserve a natural process of growth, including the refusal of all stimulants such as coffee and the maintenance of a strict vegetarianism.

The nature of the work done in a Freinet school incorporated other values, notably that of cooperative endeavour in the formulation of the journal scolaire; this was derived from the textes libres of the individual pupils, which were subject to selection, discussion and improvement by the whole class. This not only freed the pupil from cours magistral but also from the influence of the ready made textbook, in that by producing the journal scolaire on the school printing press, the children effectively created their own learning resources, becoming in a more concrete sense than in any other movement of l'éducation nouvelle, "the artisans of their own culture". These activities also bore evidence of the multiplicity of influences on Freinet's

thinking in that they incorporate both elements of progressive pedagogy and polytechnical education.

Freinet schools used not only Freinet's own techniques, as he exercised a wide eclecticism in choice of methods, drawing on Montessori and Decroly as well as some of the American progressive educators. Along with L'Institut Coopératif de l'Ecole Moderne,[41] (which may be described as the Freinet movement proper, although Freinet always denied being leader of a "movement",) Freinet also organised a cooperative organisation for the dissemination of the methods of his school, the Coopérative de l'Enseignment Laïc, whose Bibliothèque de Travail continues to attract a following more numerous than the parent movement itself.

At this point one comes to the major sources of the ambiguities in Freinet's attitudes and his role in the educational system, his view of his own organisation and its relationships to others, including the official system. Freinet frequently described his contribution to French pedagogy as being the creation of a range of techniques which were available to all who wished to use them - and it is true that some teachers subscribe to the Bibliothèque de Travail who would not subscribe to the full range of Freinet's educational thinking. Freinet often excused himself from debate over the latter aspects with such figures as Louis Legrand, who had a high regard for Freinet techniques but who refused to accept the vitalist philosophy on which they were based. (In fact Legrand was probably largely influential in the reflection of many aspects of Freinet pedagogy

in the experimental stage of the reform of the teaching of French in the elementary school). Freinet tended to side-step such comment by asserting that as a simple technician, he was ill-equipped to argue such points, leaving the reply to others in ICEM. [42]

On the other hand, Freinet's techniques must be seen in the context summed up by the title of the monthly journal of ICEM, Techniques de Vie, which meant something quite different from methods of teaching. Freinet also objected strongly to his techniques being utilised outwith their proper context, resulting in what he regarded as a distortion of his work. For example, when the Ministry first drew upon Freinet's work in Official Instructions, those of 15th July, 1963, for the classes de transition of the CES, Freinet was deeply pessimistic that his techniques would lose their essential character by being subordinated to ends other than those envisaged in his theory. [43] The nature of the "movement" presents the same contradictions. Freinet asserted that his organisation was a cooperative venture designed to provide a set of tools for the amelioration of the educational process, but in 1961, the Parisian section of the "movement" broke away amid bitter recriminations, on the grounds that Freinet refused to allow free discussion of issues affecting ICEM. The expelled, or breakaway, section, depending on whose account one reads, claimed that the success of their work in Paris led to Freinet taking umbrage, a claim denied by the latter's widow, Elise. [44] (Others outwith the movement appear to have

derived some amusement from the affair; Jean Vial, in a humorous alphabet of French education, published in L'Education in 1968, defined an innovator as someone whose life was divided between being martyred and chasing heretics.[45] Freinet seems the likeliest candidate for this description).

Similar considerations affected Freinet's relationships with other educational bodies. Freinet was highly critical of the "conspiracy of silence" mounted against his work by SNI, which ignored his movement in the pages of L'Ecole Libératrice despite the thousands of subscriptions the union received from Freinet adherents,[46] (although ICEM as frequently pictured itself as a small and persecuted avant-garde). There were equally periods of reconciliation or co-existence, and ICEM at one point had a working agreement with SUDEL, the publishing house established by the union, while fraternal delegates occasionally appeared at each other's conferences. Similarly, Freinet had periods of working cooperation with the school cooperative movement, OCCE, alternating with periods of dismissal of the latter; Freinet claimed that the ideas of the original type of cooperation had run their course by the post-war period, and that the true meaning of coopération scolaire rested in the work of ICEM.[47]

If relationships with the unions and with other progressive bodies were difficult, the relationships of the movement to the Ministry seem to have posed, (and to continue to pose for his

successors), the greatest problems of all. The affair of St Paul in 1929/30 coloured Freinet's attitude to the system for the rest of his life and still crops up in the life of the Freinet school. As a Christmas treat, children may still be shown the film about the affair of "Papa Freinet", L'Ecole Buissonière. [48] (The appeal of the film outwith France appears to have struck a less heroic note; Leslie Halliwell describes it as "a pleasant rural comedy-drama of the kind the French do well.) [49]

Freinet's hostility to the system tended to be expressed mainly in the direction of the inspectorate, a characteristic still evident in the movement today. In an article in L'Educateur in 1947, he asserted that he would not work with the inspectors until they revised their whole system of values and were prepared to enter into a relationship of partnership with teachers and one stripped of its hierarchical dimension. [50] (In this aspect, Freinet anticipated many of the tensions arising in the re-appraisal of managerial style during the rénovation pédagogique.) He was also scathingly critical of the existing school, its obsolescent methods and its poor results, failings which reflected a society, like its school, which had outlived its time.

On the other hand, Freinet claimed - as his movement still claims - that the Official Instructions of 1923 were "a veritable charter for the modern school" [51] and that only he and his collaborators had had the "courage and tenacity" to sustain the values in the face of the machinery of the official system.

This curious echo of long-standing Ministerial formulations has persisted into the rénovation pédagogique, with Freinet's successors arguing that new programmes were largely unnecessary given their approval of the 1923 Instructions. [52] As for the claim itself, it was certainly true that Freinet pedagogy reflected the full range of the curriculum with particular attention to the aesthetic subjects neglected in the state schools but it is difficult to see elsewhere the links between Freinet pedagogy and the Official Instructions, unless it be in the wide freedom in methods decreed by the latter and to a large extent denied in practice.

These ambiguities and the obvious ambivalence of the movement towards the official system were intensified by events from the early 1960's onwards. As Freinet pedagogy exercised an increasing influence on specific aspects of the system, Freinet and his successors were torn between euphoria on the one hand and distrust on the other. When, in July, 1963, Freinet pedagogy formed the basis for the new instructions relating to the classes de transition of the new CES, Freinet's first reaction was to assert that "désormais, nos techniques ont droit de cité," [53] a euphoria offset within a couple of pages of the same issue of L'Educateur by deep misgivings that the methods would be distorted to the service of aims alien to those of the Freinet movement; breaching the walls of the official system immediately raised the spectre of the loss of the ideological purity of the movement. The ambivalence of this position may also be seen to be compounded

by the claim of the movement to represent the true implementation of the Official Instructions of 1923, a claim which adds an element of irony in that while Freinet techniques alone reflected the dominant values of official pedagogy, these techniques could not be turned to serve the ends of the official system, without losing their essential character.

However much official acceptance threatened the essence of his pedagogy and thus had to be viewed with reservations, Freinet showed few of these reservations in his consideration of the relative standing of his own movement and other movements within l'éducation nouvelle. Official approbation was advanced as evidence that the Freinet movement had supplanted the Decroly movement and the coopératives scolaires; the Circular of 15th July, 1963, placed ICEM in official possession of the true centres of interest and the true meaning of coopération scolaire. [54]

Freinet's successors have tended to stress more the negative side of the above conflict of values as Freinet ideas have increasingly had some influence on pedagogic reform. For example, Freinet ideas contributed largely to the long period of research which laid the basis for the Rouchette Plan which in turn led, indirectly and in a diluted form, to the 1972 Official Instructions for the teaching of French in the elementary school. ICEM appears not to have been won over by this mark of official acceptance in the work of the research teams, or by the influence of the latter on the official programmes and stuck to the founder's endorsement of the official texts of 1923 as entirely adequate,

while remaining highly critical of reform "descending from above". Thus R.F. Mackenzie, after visiting Freinet schools in 1979 could write that Freinet techniques had never been adopted by the French educational system. [55] If ICEM do not accept the new official pedagogy as reflecting their principles, opponents of the reforms have been in less doubt and have castigated new approaches as "Freinet pedagogy", while teachers also responded to the 1972 Instructions with some hesitation, finding these "Freinet techniques" very difficult to apply. [56] This, however, adds yet another dimension to the question, around the central problem of the relationship between theory and practice and the identification of the obstacles which actually hinder the implementation of Freinet pedagogy.

While the specific events of the rénovation pédagogique as it affected the teaching of French more properly belong to a subsequent chapter, it is worth noting at this point the general elements of the process for the purpose of examining further the ambiguities surrounding the influence of the Freinet movement. This may be done most clearly by itemising the steps in the process, as follows:-

i) Freinet techniques were influential in the research stage, (1963-69), of the reform of French teaching, although Louis Legrand, one of the moving spirits in this process, rejected the vitalist philosophy of ICEM.

ii) The original conclusions of the research were published

in a modified form as Principes de l'Expérience en Cours, [57] which had only a limited influence on

iii) the Official Instructions of 4th December, 1972 which in turn [58]

iv) occasioned some misgivings among teachers, on grounds which included the difficulty of "Freinet methods".

One thus arrives at the problem of identifying precisely the point at which the resistance to Freinet pedagogy occurs; if the influence of Freinet approaches, subject to three levels of filtration before their diluted effect on the Official Instructions, still generated problems of implementation through teacher opposition, it serves at least to establish the weakness of the ICEM claim of mass support among teachers, suppressed by ministerial hostility.

Since the death of Freinet in 1966, there have been other pressures on the movement. Freinet himself devoted some thought to the question of the direction to be taken by the movement after his death. These thoughts were mainly prompted by Freinet's study of the Decroly movement, which he considered had failed to sustain its momentum after the death of the founder, despite Decroly's own reluctance to systematise his pedagogical thinking with this risk in mind. Freinet was anxious that his own followers in ICEM should preserve the dynamic character of the movement by avoiding any kind of personality cult after his death, or any sterile preservation of his thought as an end

in itself. It is not clear whether this risk has been entirely avoided, since most issues of L'Educateur since his death have begun with a quotation from the work of the founder on the main subject of the issue.

In addition, by the early 1970's the Freinet movement had been replaced as the "enfant terrible" of French pedagogy by another set of innovatory movements, generally grouped under the heading "pédagogies non-directives". This has turned attention within ICEM at least in part towards an increasing concern for identity in the face of the challenge posed by these new movements, giving the impression that ICEM has not only to look ahead but also sideways. Writing in L'Educateur of January, 1977, [59] Jacky Chassane acknowledged that there had been tensions within the movement over the question of mass pedagogy vis-a-vis autogestion; as one of the movements of l'éducation nouvelle, the former aspect of Freinet aims had attracted criticisms from the non-directives, on the grounds that newer movements saw it as a form of "enlightened despotism" rather than a real attempt to rethink relationships within the classroom. Although Chassane rejected the assumptions of the non-directives and reiterated the principles of the Freinet pedagogy as being based on the questioning of established values and society and as being as far removed from the "laissez-faire" of the new movements as it was from the authoritarianism of traditional pedagogy, the article concluded on the rather pessimistic note that essential

change lay in the development of political relationships within the system, which casts doubt on the value of both the revolutionary pedagogy of Freinet advocates and revolutionary changes in the patterns of educational relationships. On the other hand, Pierre Vrin identified considerable areas of agreement between the work of Freinet and of the American progenitor of the new movements, Carl Rogers, in terms which tended towards the generalities of child-centred pedagogy and which did little to explain the different orientations of the respective movements in France. [60] (The evolution of French pedagogical approaches based on Roger's ideas, discussed below, may go some way towards explaining this.)

Objective analysis of the impact of the Freinet movement is somewhat difficult, requiring a balance to be struck between the euphoric protestations and weary resignation which alternate in the literature of ICEM, as well as between the very different perceptions of the movement among those outwith it. Freinet has been claimed by his followers to be the most widely read educational thinker in world history, (or the most widely read "simple practitioner"), on the grounds that his work has been translated into 15 languages, (not including English). [61] The movement has sometimes claimed a mass following in French schools while at other times has described Freinet teachers as a small avant-garde, while even in the 1970's the fact that a professeur d'école normale could be a member of ICEM was sufficient justification for an article in L'Educateur by the professeur,

who seemed to be ICEM's only representative in the training institutions. [62] Against the claims of width of readership must be set the protests against the conspiracy of silence mounted against the organisation, a theme carried on after Freinet's death by his widow, Elise.

Estimates of membership vary widely. R.F. Mackenzie was given a pessimistic estimate of about 2% of teachers implementing Freinet pedagogy in 1980, [63] (which also conveys implicit judgment on the ICEM view of what teachers call "Freinet methods" in the new programmes for the teaching of French). Louis Legrand put the subscriptions to the ICEM Bibliothèque de Travail at about 20,000 during the mid-1970's, as against ICEM's claim of about 50,000 members, (out of a total of 440,000 elementary and secondary teachers in the state system). [64] Even this figure of 20,000, however, does not signify total adherence to the principles of the movement by all concerned - if Ministry and innovators may exercise a certain eclecticism, so too may classroom teachers.

Louis Legrand, always sympathetic to the central aspects of Freinet's pedagogical practice and one of the main agents of the influence which it has had on official policy, argued that the Freinet movement had always seen itself as primarily a vehicle of contestation of the dominant values of the official system and the society of which it was a part, thus engendering a variety of characteristics such as pride in originality, a taste for martyrdom, a desire for ideological purity and a fear

of acceptance by the system, which combined to give the movement an uneasy conscience about its relationships to the state system. Legrand thought that by 1975 Freinet pedagogy was at least tolerated by the official system and that his ideas had lost their original "virulence" from the latter's viewpoint so that Freinet's role of contestation had passed to others. In Legrand's view, the true heirs of Freinet were in the movements of Rogerian or non-directive pedagogy rather than the "officialisés" and "recupérés" "guardians of the temple" in ICEM, [65] a judgment which may help explain the concerns of Chassane. This may also cast light on the enigmatic forecast of Marc-André Bloch, writing in 1959, who argued that while Freinet had done more than anyone to change the face of French education than any other innovator, his ideas would never become the official pedagogy of the French system; [66] that this forecast proved accurate rested as much on the attitudes of the movement as on those of the Ministry.

These considerations in turn raise the question of the relationship between the pedagogic aims and the wider social and political aims of the Freinet movement. Freinet's criticisms of the existing social order were never balanced by a positive and detailed perception of alternatives, a point which is regarded by Guy Avanzini as central to the question of the limited influence of the Freinet movement [67] and which also figures in much of the Communist Party criticism of ICEM; in the absence of such perceived alternatives, Pierre Dézert of the PCF [68] accused Freinet of reducing educational questions to

the same terms as those employed by the technocrats of the Ministry. The same characteristics appear in the work of the movement since the death of Freinet, in which the distrust of a renovation arriving "from above" has been combined with a generally leftist political rhetoric.

Georges Gaudin [69] added a further element to consideration of the obstacles to the spread of Freinet pedagogy. In addition to the opposition of the publishers who refused to publish his material and of the capitalist school system of which his pedagogy was a negation, Freinet's work also encountered the resistance of families concerned for traditional measures of success as exemplified in exam results. On the other hand, Gaudin acknowledged the limitations inherent in Freinet's work in a rural setting and his opposition to many aspects of gigantisme in education as part of the phenomenon of urbanisation. Freinet was opposed to schools of more than five classes, class sizes of over 25, (in this being totally in step with all the teachers' unions and the political parties of the left), which constituted inappropriate environments for the development of the pupil in the same way as the city itself was an inappropriate environment for the growth of the child. Gaudin also asserted that in large schools, the continuity and educational teamwork which were essential to Freinet pedagogy were difficult to achieve. This set of assumptions and practical limitations, however, had an important consequence in that they tended to reduce Freinet pedagogy to the status of an épiphénomène, itself

threatened by the closure of the rural schools which sustained it. That this problem posed difficult tensions for the movement may be gathered from Chassane, who acknowledged that the non-directive pedagogies had attracted adherents from the Freinet movements partly as a result of the difficulties of urbanisation.

The rise of the former school of pedagogy, variously known as pédagogie institutionelle, or pédagogie non-directive, has added a new dimension to educational debate in the last fifteen years. To a certain extent these movements derive from Rousseau and other main strands of what appears increasingly as "traditional" progressive pedagogy, but under a variety of other influences, notably that of the American psychiatrist, Carl Rogers; the various schools of pedagogy within the movement are sometimes even described as pédagogies rogeriennes. This is not to imply a slavish adherence to the views of Rogers; perhaps nothing in recent educational history illustrates the influence of context on educational borrowing as the results of a colloquium held in Paris in 1966 to allow the assembled representatives of the various movements to meet their mentor. The main outcome of the colloquium was the evidence of the communication gap which had developed between Rogers and his followers, the former's unsystematic views on education being quite at variance with the products of the inexorable systematisations of the latter.[70]

The first of the group, Michel Lobrot, represents the closest adherence to the Rousseauian inheritance, being strongly

reminiscent of the "negative education" propounded by the latter and by Cousinet, with the addition of the group dynamics techniques developed by Rogers. His main work, La Pédagogie Institutionelle [71] is also strongly reminiscent of a modern "collective" Emile. In several respects, Lobrot echoes the thinking of Cousinet, for example in arguing that "interests" at either extra- or infra-educational levels may be quite foreign to motivations for work and that new methods tend to take dreams for realities; what the "pédagogue de sourire" achieves is no more than an enlightened despotism, in Lobrot's view as in Cousinet's, the worst form of authoritarianism. [72]

Lobrot identified four stages in the elaboration of group pedagogy. The initial opening up of self to others is followed by group attempts to arrive at a modus vivendi prior to applying itself to the division of labour within the group. The final step is the tackling of the actual task in hand. The teacher plays no part in this process, the information on which action is based coming entirely from the group experience, this experienced being in no way influenced by any predetermined value systems imposed by the adult world. [73] This rejection of all pre-existing values lies at the core of much non-directive pedagogy.

Lobrot's work has attracted a great deal of criticism, but this is best dealt with in the concluding comment on the influence of the various movements. Others within the field of non-directive pedagogy have tried to mitigate this negation of the teacher's role in reaction against the general uncertainties

surrounding this role in progressive pedagogy as a whole. The most notable figures in this respect are F. Oury and A. Vasquez [74] whose "Institutional Pedagogy" seeks to reconcile the conflicts between the freedom of the child and the authority of the teacher by creating appropriate institutional mechanisms whereby the role of the latter in achieving the former may be developed. Oury and Vasquez aim at the creation of an organised, stable and strict environment permitting reciprocity of exchanges, working from group methods in an endlessly adaptable situation. Above all this is not a return to the traditional. The pattern allows for the division of labour as the definition of individual worth within the class, the implementation of group sanctions and even such apparently traditional devices as pupil rankings - but across a much wider range of activities than in the traditional classroom. [75]

Two levels of conseil exist within the system. The team or minor council involves pupils only while the teacher participates in the cooperative or major council. Oury also introduces a note of dissension with "traditional" child-centred ideals in rejecting the role of pupil spontaneity in education, (in which he agrees with Freinet in part), but reaffirms the progressive concern with methods rather than content. The theories of Oury and Vasquez may be best summed up in the stress laid on the active roles envisaged for both teacher and pupil, the acceptance of the values of the group and the unity between teacher and pupil developed by the recognition of the affective dimension of the relationship. The

pedagogic aims of the movement may be characterised as anti-passivity, anti-dogmatism and with a countervailing stress on the originality of the learner and the communal experience of teacher and taught.[76] Insofar as this represents a synthesis of these respective roles, Oury and Vasquez have attracted less criticism than other groupings within this general field and acknowledgment of the possibilities which may be afforded by their approach has been forthcoming from such normally trenchant critics of non-directive pedagogy as Georges Snyders.[77].

There are several other theorists active in this area, such as Lourau and De Peretti, but the two outlined above are the two most widely read and quoted and this brief outline of their respective approaches may serve as a general indication of the directions taken by such schools of pedagogy. Neither Lobrot's work nor that of Oury and Vasquez has had significant effect on official thinking and while the official rénovation pédagogique laid much stress on the transformation of relationships within the class, this stopped far short of the intentions of such as Lobrot, representing in terms of non-directive theory the kind of paternalism which they criticised in older schools of l'éducation nouvelle. Nor do the non-directive movements enjoy a large membership among classroom teachers, but this is a problem common to all progressive movements. (The difficulty of attracting recruits may be gauged from the membership of the officially tolerated Freinet movement.) There are in addition a number of smaller groupings whose priorities tend towards the political as much as the educational, for example

the former Parisian section of ICEM, now L'Institut Parisien de L'Ecole Moderne. More significantly, the position of the new avant-garde has faced a kind of instant dépassement by the theories of the de-schoolers and of post-Marxist sociologists such as Bourdieu and Passeron, [78] whose critiques of the system have called the new progressive movements into question as they called the older generation of progressive movements into question. The major works of Bourdieu and Passeron are too well known to require summary here, even if limitations of space permitted it, but it is worth noting the former's succinctly dismissive view that the "Jacobin" tradition of progressive movements has served, while apparently contesting the values of the official system, only to confirm them further. [79]

It is more important for the present topic to attempt some summing up of the influence of the progressive movements as a whole, both in terms of the general emphases of the various schools of pedagogy and in terms of their relationship with other political and syndical groups within the system. L'Education nouvelle in France attracts a number of criticisms familiar in the English speaking world. Georges Snyders, in his work, La Pédagogie Progressiste, [80] identified a number of problems common to movements of l'éducation nouvelle and these are further illustrated and analysed below.

The first of Snyders's criticisms concerned the marked tendency of progressive pedagogies to harken after a return to a rural society, a desire animated by a considerable distrust of

urban life. In the case of Freinet, it has already been noted that this antipathy to urban society was a central tenet of his vitalist philosophy, while this antipathy underpinned at least some of his hostility to GFEN. This attitude also reinforced his largely ideological objections to the large publishing houses and is reflected in his views on the production of educational materials, in which matter Freinet appears to have been something of an educational William Morris, finding salvation in a cooperative, socialist, cottage industry.

Cousinet reflects the same preoccupations. Cousinet eliminated radio and television from his perceptions of education on the grounds that they were inimical to the true interests of children. It should be noted here that traditional and child-centred views sometimes occupied common ground on such matters - Chateau evinced a profound distrust of film and radio because of their value to totalitarian regimes. Both were markedly out of step with the trend of reformist opinion within the system on this matter, where it was recognised that l'école parallèle was an inescapable aspect of the child's own experience. Thus the kind of criticism of traditional theory which runs through much of the child-centred opposition on the grounds that the former tended to create an artificial gulf between education and life should be seen against the consideration that in the latter, there tended to be a tightly circumscribed view of the life to which education should relate.[81] This tendency to withdrawal from the urban environment in which the questions surrounding education

were posed at their most acute has already been studied more fully in the case of the Freinet movement; it seems also to have contributed to the spread of the non-directive movements, in that while they too are highly critical of the effects of the large urban school, (the école-caserne as it is labelled), the work of such as Oury and Vasquez is firmly centred in the problems of the urban milieu.

Snyders's second objection to progressive theory is that there is a prevalent assumption that l'éducation nouvelle itself is a sufficient condition for the democratisation of schooling or a wider social democracy. This assumption has already been noted in the Langevin/Wallon Plan, in the discussion of moral and civic education in which active methods were seen as entailing per se a training for democratic living.[82] Snyders argues, however, that this tends to overlook the origins of l'éducation nouvelle in France, notably in the work of Adolphe Ferrière and in the pedagogy of the Ecole Des Roches, in which active methods served the purpose of selecting and training a better class of dirigeants. In fairness, it is difficult to apply this criticism to Freinet, whose work was itself largely motivated by a reaction against these origins. The converse of the original error was the assumption that traditional education was by definition anti-democratic and authoritarian, a proposition which sits ill with Alain's attitude towards authority. In addition, if l'éducation nouvelle was associated with the political left, it did follow that all on the political left were committed to l'éducation

nouvelle and shared left-wing principles and communal rhetoric sometimes concealed deep divisions over pedagogic values, for example in the French Communist Party.

Snyders's third criticism of l'éducation nouvelle is one entirely familiar in the English-speaking world, that of the role of the teacher. French educational theory seems to have been free of the facile sloganising characteristic of American or English progressive education but with the effect that the role of the teacher has been much more systematically argued out of the educational process in the works of such as Cousinet and Lobrot. This criticism is not applicable to the work of Freinet or of Oury and Vasquez. Snyders, however, has criticised the Rogerian inheritance on which the non-directive theories in general have been based, on the grounds that it does not constitute an educational theory at all - nor has such a claim been made by Rogers - and since it offers "neither value nor verity", no profitable collaboration between learner and teacher is possible; Lobrot's teacher as "facilitator" has simply renounced his pedagogic function in the mistaken view that the only conflict in education is that between generations. Louis Legrand has also attacked the denial of all prior values in non-directive pedagogy, arguing that the complete refusal of authority must necessarily be modified by the demands of the moment; if Lobrot accepts that he would intervene to stop a child running into traffic, he must therefore accept some conception of the authority and responsibility of the adult and

endorse at least one value outwith the immediate experience of the child or group.[83]

This negation of the role of the teacher in child-centred theories is related to another common criticism of the movements of l'éducation nouvelle, that of their relative neglect of questions of content. If Cousinet and his successors have been justified in their criticisms of the school programmes, they have been less convincing in the matter of providing a convincing alternative. Freinet is again an exception here, in that his pedagogy envisages a clear progress, new material not being tackled until prior knowledge and skills have been mastered. Freinet, however, has still attracted criticism on the grounds that his pedagogy places too much weight on the judgment of the group as applied to the texte libre, while his system makes no apparent provision for the transition to the study of the wider heritage of literary culture or scientific method, thus incurring the risk of enclosing the child in his own milieu; this criticism echoes familiar criticism of the "dominance of the foreground" in English and American progressive theory.[84]

Cousinet laid considerable stress on the familiar goal of learning to work as an end in itself arising from the practice of group work, an aspect also prominent in the work of Oury and Vasquez. Similar formulae have appeared in the official renovation, in the form of "apprendre à être" or "apprendre à apprendre", the latter being familiar in its English translation as "learning how to learn". Critics of this emphasis in English

progressive education, such as R.F. Dearden, see this as a modern form of the old theory of transfer of training. Snyders's criticisms focus on the relationship between this aspect of child-centred theory and the provenance of several of the movements of l'éducation nouvelle which originated in work with the retarded or the handicapped, this being true of the cases of Oury, Lobrot and Decroly. This is a double-edged argument, however, in that it was in these areas of educational provision that innovation was most likely to be tolerated and it is significant that the first official acceptance of elements of Freinet pedagogy came in programmes for the classes de transition. This line of criticism was also related to the fears of the "dominance of the foreground", in that both Snyders and Legrand had profound reservations about the ability of progressive theories to encompass the transformation of thought and attitudes necessary to allow the child to cope with the complexities of modern society, but Legrand acknowledged that this problem was not exclusive to l'éducation nouvelle in that the prevailing official pedagogy offered no indication of how the primitive observation of the child might be transformed into a scientific method. [85]

As a result of these misgivings about the various versions of l'éducation nouvelle there have been long-standing reservations about the adoption of any one theory as the basis for a renovation of the system of pedagogy. The reservations of Henri Wallon have already been noted and Wallon's search for a synthesis in the work of the Soviet educator, Anton Makarenko, has been carried

into the present by Georges Snyders, like Wallon a member of the PCF. Guy Avanzini attributes the lack of influence of l'éducation nouvelle to the misoneism of the teaching profession, a judgment which he supports by reference to the role of the question of class size in educational debate. Excessive class sizes have been cited during the last 25 years as one of the major causes of pedagogical immobilism and there has been a general agreement since the 1940's on the optimum figure of 25 as a maximum size. Avanzini points out on the other hand that there has been no progressive movement in the direction of more active methods as the maximum class size has approached final attainment of this figure; [86] if no change occurs between having 65 pupils and having 30, it seems unlikely that attitudes will be transformed by the last stage of reduction.

While this is a perceptive appraisal of the extent to which the demand for a maximum class size of 25 has become a totem of post-war education in France, the criticisms of Louis Legrand suggest that the problem has deeper roots. Legrand acknowledges the contribution of the movements of l'éducation nouvelle in the re-discovery of the child but argues that they fail to meet what he considers to be the main priority, a renovation of rationalism in a form appropriate to the modern world and taking account of the contribution of the educational sciences, [87] a formulation which echoes the less specific "scientific humanism" of Paul Langevin. Legrand explains the limited appeal of l'éducation nouvelle as being a repetition of the fate of the

positivist philosophies of Jules Ferry and the other founding figures of the primary school of the Third Republic. The intellectualist pre-occupations of the latter tended to pass little into practice, being instead translated into routine, dogma and the furnishing of the memory rather than the critical intelligence sought by the Official Instructions. L'Education nouvelle in Legrand's view faced exactly the same problems and stood as little opportunity of passing into practice as the ideas of its predecessors. While Legrand does not make the point specifically, the logic of this argument also represents a pessimistic prognosis for the fate of the renewed rationalism he himself sought in educational reform. Legrand's views on this point come very close to the fears expressed by ICEM about the rénovation pédagogique merely creating a new dogmatism which would reduce the new programmes in turn to routine and memorisation.[88]

The influence of l'éducation nouvelle has also been subject to the effects of the deep divisions between the different movements, so that l'éducation nouvelle has never represented a consensus view of child-centred education. These divisions have been compounded by the fact that the other types of interest group in French education have tended to cut across the traditional-progressive boundary, a phenomenon all the more acute because of the lack of clear semantic boundaries between differing pedagogic value systems. The progressive movements have generally been united by a common left-wing political orientation, (although

even this has been subject to the effects of the divisions within the political left,) whereas the political left has never been unified by a common pedagogic orientation. SNI has seldom shown great interest in l'éducation nouvelle in other than a generalised form which may reflect little more than the common terminology of French pedagogical debate. The union's pedagogical and political ethos tend to reflect the origins of the system to which it belongs and its journal, L'Ecole Libératrice, still reflects the idealism of the Third Republic. The inspector Henri Wadier goes so far as to label the union - like the PCF - as "reactionary" [89] although it would perhaps be fairer to say that syndical preoccupations have tended to be more fully typical of the outlook and work of the union than pedagogical reform.

On the political left, the French Communist Party illustrates the tensions and occasional contradictions of the political left when dealing with pedagogy even though the PCF, which publishes a monthly journal, L'Ecole et la Nation, would appear to be the political party with the most distinctive party perception of education. The various leading figures in pedagogical thinking within the party would all claim to belong to the avant-garde of pedagogical thought, but this shared rhetoric conceals a wide variety of pedagogical standpoints. Mme Seclet-Riou was and is an advocate of l'éducation nouvelle, arguing that PCF teacher-members should accept the responsibilities for leadership in the process of disseminating new methods, [90] but this advocacy was in a rather unspecific form within which precise allegiance is rather

difficult to determine, apart from a homage to Henri Wallon, which is the shared property of most of that generation within the party. On the other hand, Georges Cogniot represents traditional educational thinking at its most vigorously polemical, although Mme Seclet-Riou attributes to his Esquisse a major influence on the Langevin/Wallon Plan [91] and there is no published disagreement between the two on pedagogical matters. Cogniot, however, has been violently critical of new programmes and new methods, castigating them as machinations of monopoly capitalism, pro-American mania and the "frantic demogogy of reaction", all designed to debase and debilitate the masses by denying them culture. [92] His views on the primacy of Latin and the formal study of the French language, embodying a traditional view of culture générale differ only from other secondary views in terms of applicability; to Cogniot, the study of Latin was a crucial element in mass education rather than the preserve of the selective secondary schools - although he acknowledged that "not everyone could be Raphael or Langevin". [93] This stress is still found in reactions to the Haby reforms of 1975 onwards; according to M. Lumbroso, the lightening of programmes during the rénovation pédagogique was aimed not at the removal of overloading or combating the failure of encyclopaedism but at depriving the masses of their full educational rights, a policy to be compared with socialist countries in which educational reform had been directed at increasing the content of education. [94] The Party has also frequently betrayed elitist pre-occupations; during the 1950's, party rhetoric laid great emphasis on the"little Mozarts and

Descartes's"sacrificed to failings of the school system, [95] while more recently much use has been made of a quotation from an anonymous "Prix Nobel" in support of demands for higher standards of attainment. [96]

This aspect of the party's educational thinking reflects Soviet influence, which has always been present in the minds of French reformers and not only in the PCF - Jean Zay, like Paul Langevin, was highly impressed by Soviet achievements. Sometimes during the 1950's, this influence was portrayed somewhat unconvincingly, for example when commending to instituteurs the precious pedagogical insights of Stalin's latest book. [97] More recently, the dominant theme has been the party's belief in the Soviet interpretation of pedagogical progress as lying in the perfecting of didacticism, a belief which runs through the PCF reform proposal of 1966, revised in 1970, which became part of the PCF-Socialist common programme. According to the project, the common courses of socialist countries raised the educational achievements of the mass of pupils to a level only matched by only the very best pupils in the very best lycées in the French system. [98] (If this may read like a conception of "elitist" standards of education for all, Cogniot's reservations on the ability of all to attain the highest standards, usually defined in terms of outright genius, may serve as illustrative of the tensions between academic traditions and mass education).

The party has also remained hostile to the majority of the movements of l'éducation nouvelle, especially that of Freinet.

It may be of significance that the party figures most active in l'éducation nouvelle have usually belonged to GFEN, which being non-dogmatic by definition does not offer an alternative world view. Wallon's reservations about Freinet's work have already been noted but these were accompanied by acknowledgment of the value of some of his work. Later comment has been much more hostile. Pierre Dézert's criticisms have already been noted in part, these being part of a wider attack on ICEM and the romantic aura which surrounded it. Dézert criticised the failure of the movement not only to condemn current problems of class size and teacher remuneration, (the first part of which accusation is untrue), but also to evolve an overall view of the problems of education, leading to a simplistic belief that the problems of écoles-casernes could be solved by limiting the size of schools to five classes. [99] (The first of these criticisms again is hard to reconcile with Legrand's acceptance of many aspects of Freinet methods but rejection of his overall view of education). Mme Seclet-Riou was also highly critical of Freinet's work, rejecting, (and seemingly misunderstanding), tâtonnement expérimental as "an anarchic and libertarian pedagogy". [100]

The PCF has also been hostile to the non-directive movements and to other radical critics of schooling such as the post-Marxists such as Bourdieu and Passeron and the de-schoolers, among whose number Illich seems to have provoked lively discussion during the later 1960's. The review in L'Ecole et la Nation of Snyders's work on the non-directives took the author to task for his qualified

approval of the work of Oury and Vasquez; the latter in turn were criticised for their "near-obsessional multiplication of institutional structures within the school. [101] The de-schoolers were dismissed as "géurisseurs pédagogiques", whose irrational influence on the teaching profession was merely a sign of the depth of the crisis in French education. According to L'Ecole et la Nation, the PCF sought "neither to await the morrow of the revolution to transform the school nor to institute a good school in a bad society". [102]

The inherent tensions in this position gave the party problems in dealing with the criticisms of such as Bourdieu and Passeron. The PCF has long been critical of other parties' assumptions that the school could be the agent of meaningful social change. In 1955, the PCF reform proposal was presented as a counter to the Socialist Party proposal of M. Naegelen and his colleagues, who had failed to understand that the transformation of society would come, "not on the benches of the lay school but in the fires of the proletarian revolution". [103] Similarly SNI was vigorously criticised for its retention of "the outmoded utopianism of the IIIrd Republic", as exemplified by the title of its weekly bulletin, L'Ecole Libératrice. [104] On the other hand, Bourdieu's criticisms of the effect of the "Jacobin" ideology of the critics of the existing system, as tending to confirm it in the guise of attacking it, so that the school remained a device for confirming and legitimising social inequalities, seems to have caught the PCF between its reform policies and its rhetoric. J. Palmero answered Bourdieu's criticisms by returning to the

terminology of SNI; if the personnel of the schools had faith in the justice of liberation, then the school could be genuinely libératrice![105]

In conclusion, therefore, it may be argued that the movements of l'éducation nouvelle remained minority concerns for a wide and complex variety of reasons, some proper to the movements themselves, others arising from the relationship of the movements to other determinants of educational interests within the French system. It may be argued that every such group represented essentially a coalition of varying interests held together for a specific purpose but without necessarily sharing any other common ground outwith the specific instance. Thus a union like SGEN might show a moderate interest in educational reform and l'éducation nouvelle, but also reflected a cautious respect for its secondary membership. The PCF shared a common educational vocabulary deriving from a common ideology but one which concealed important differences in educational thinking, which were on occasion made more explicit in the rénovation pédagogique. Conversely movements in favour of l'éducation nouvelle might also encompass a range of political views within a generally left-wing orientation or might include members interested in the pedagogical developments which they pursued without being fully in support of such political values as were espoused by the movement.

The nature of some of the movements represented a further obstacle to greater official acceptance or wider dissemination of their ideas, in ways which tended to confirm Henri Wallon's

rather pessimistic appraisal of progressive education. Wallon's neo-Comtian schema of educational progress has already been discussed in Chapter II. [106] The Freinet movement in particular seems to have sought deliberately to remain at the "revolutionary" stage, identifying Wallon's "positive" stage as either a return to the "dogmatic" or at least a circular process which inevitably led back to the "dogmatic". The prospect of mass dissemination of ideas and practices was thus inseparable, in the view of the movement, from the fear of official acceptance on which this possibility rested. ICEM saw thereby the risk of the distinctive philosophical and political values of the movement being sacrificed. Such reticence was not unique to the Freinet movement; Cousinet expressed comparable reservations about the dilution of the principles of l'éducation nouvelle [107] although his work shows little of the inbuilt political hostility to the system in ICEM attitudes. In the case of the Freinet movement, too, the depth of such fears may be gauged by the fact that the loss of some of its members to the non-directive movements from the mid-1960's was later attributed to the growing degree of official acceptance of Freinet pedagogy. [108] It should perhaps also be said that later experience of reform did not entirely conflict with ICEM prognostications and several of the major participant groups in the development of the reform experienced considerable disillusion with the results of official reform.

In the event, the movements of l'éducation nouvelle had a considerable effect on the development of the rénovation pédagogique

as it passed into official policy from 1969 onwards. Members of GFEN and ICEM were directly involved in the early stages of the reform of the teaching of French, through their participation in the work of the Rouchette Commission from 1963 onwards. Members of GFEN and CRAP were influential in the work of APMEP, L'Association de Professeurs de Mathématiques de L'Enseignement Publique, which began to work towards the reform of the teaching of mathematics, from about the same time. The summation of this growing influence came in the establishment of the Commission pour la Rénovation Pédagogique, launched by Alain Peyrefitte in 1968 and reactivated by Edgar Faure. In 1969 GFEN was strongly represented on the Commission, which laid the groundwork for the later implementation of the reform from 1969 onwards.

These developments were marked, however, by a variety of tensions arising from the different expectations of the different participants in the reform process. In addition, this increased influence of various movements committed to l'éducation nouvelle reflected an official acceptance which was not accompanied by any great increase in the membership of the organisations. Indeed, the events of 1968 presented a somewhat contradictory picture of movements involved to an unprecedented extent in an officially supported process of re-appraisal of the elementary school curriculum but still pessimistic over the lack of significant support within the teaching profession. In the same year, Gaston Mialaret estimated the membership of GFEN at about 2,000, [109] two and a half times its membership in the immediate pre-war

years but still a tiny proportion of the total personnel of the system. Before pursuing the implications of this contrast further, however, it is necessary to examine the process whereby official thinking moved towards a belief in a need for fundamental reform in the elementary school.